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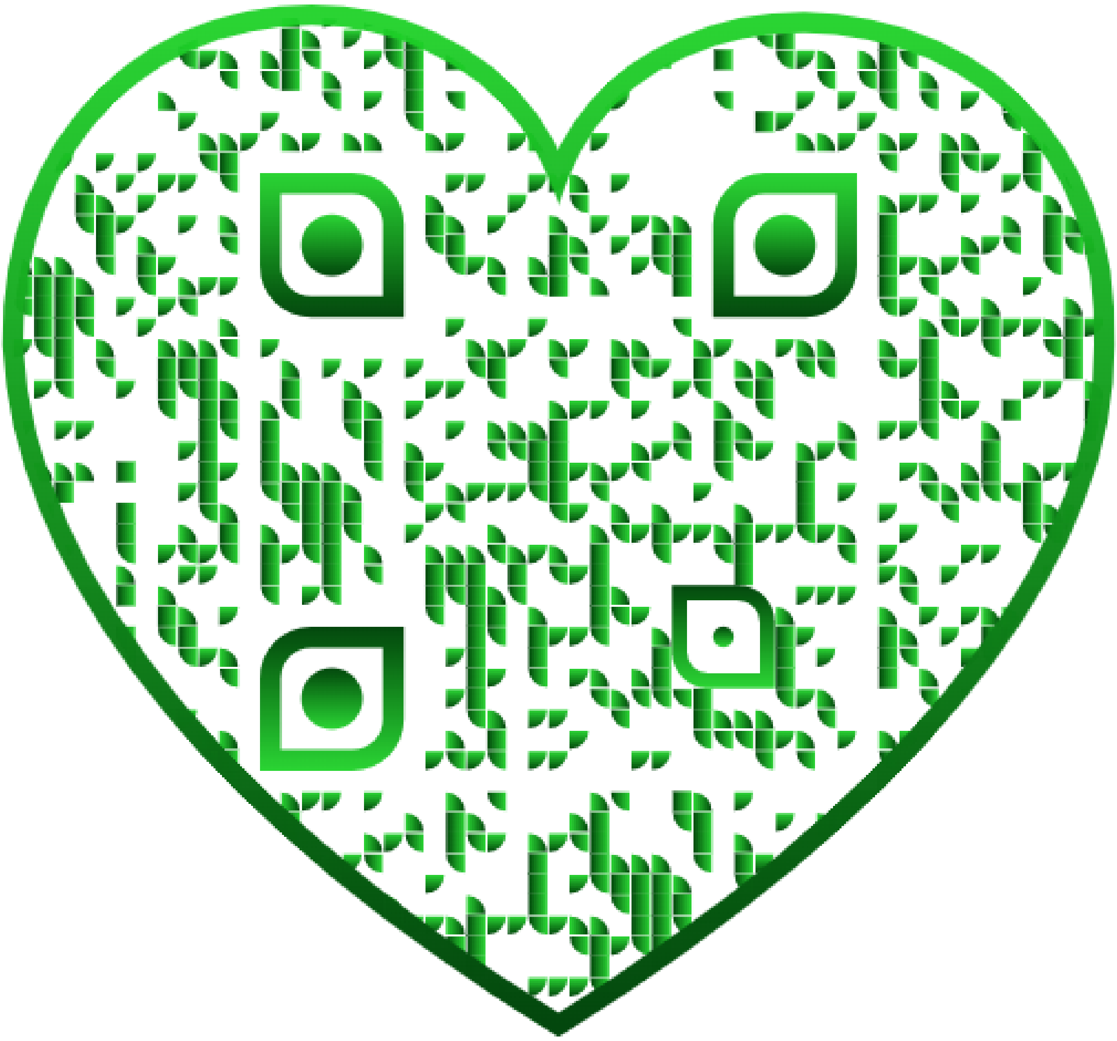

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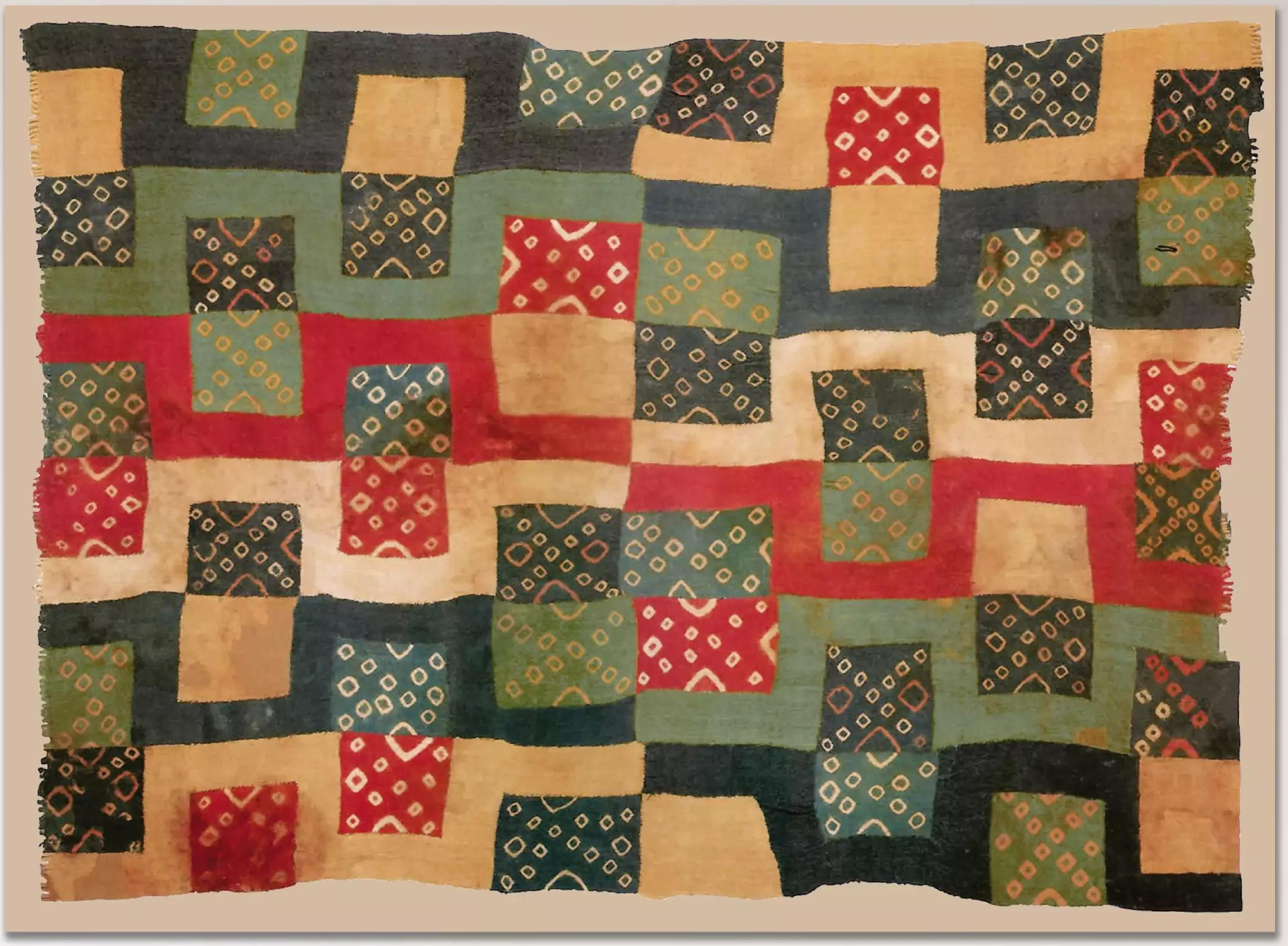

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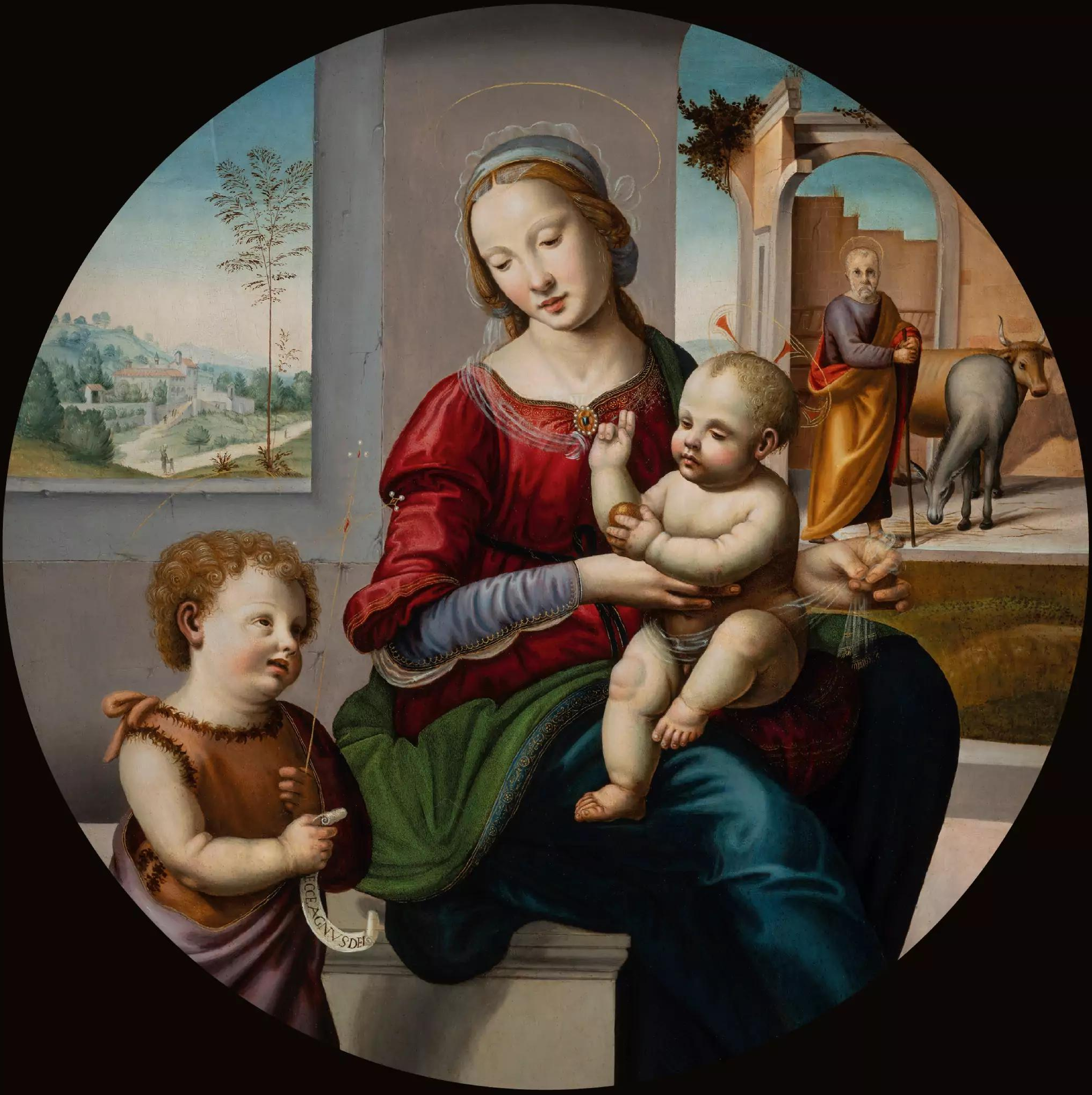

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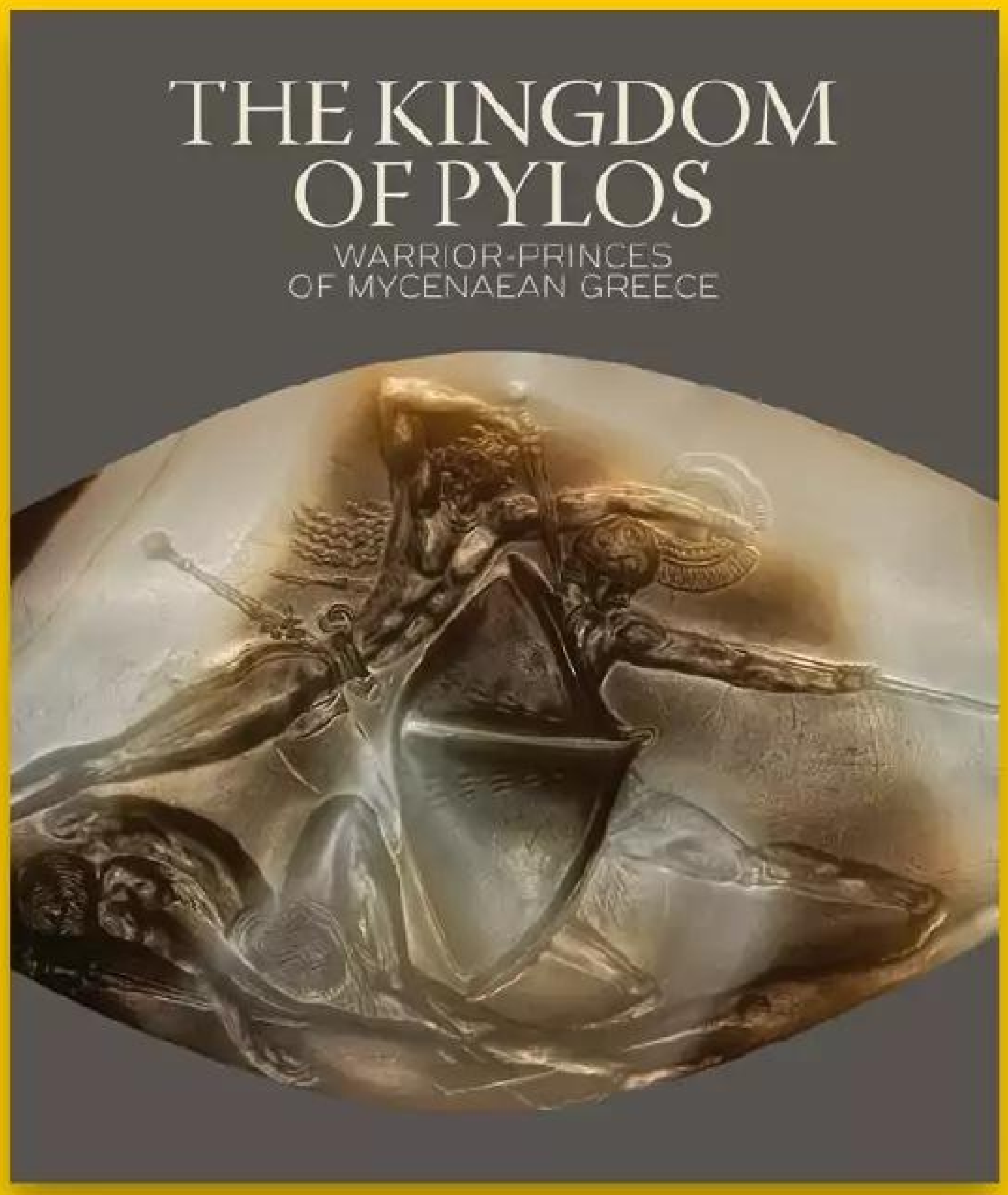
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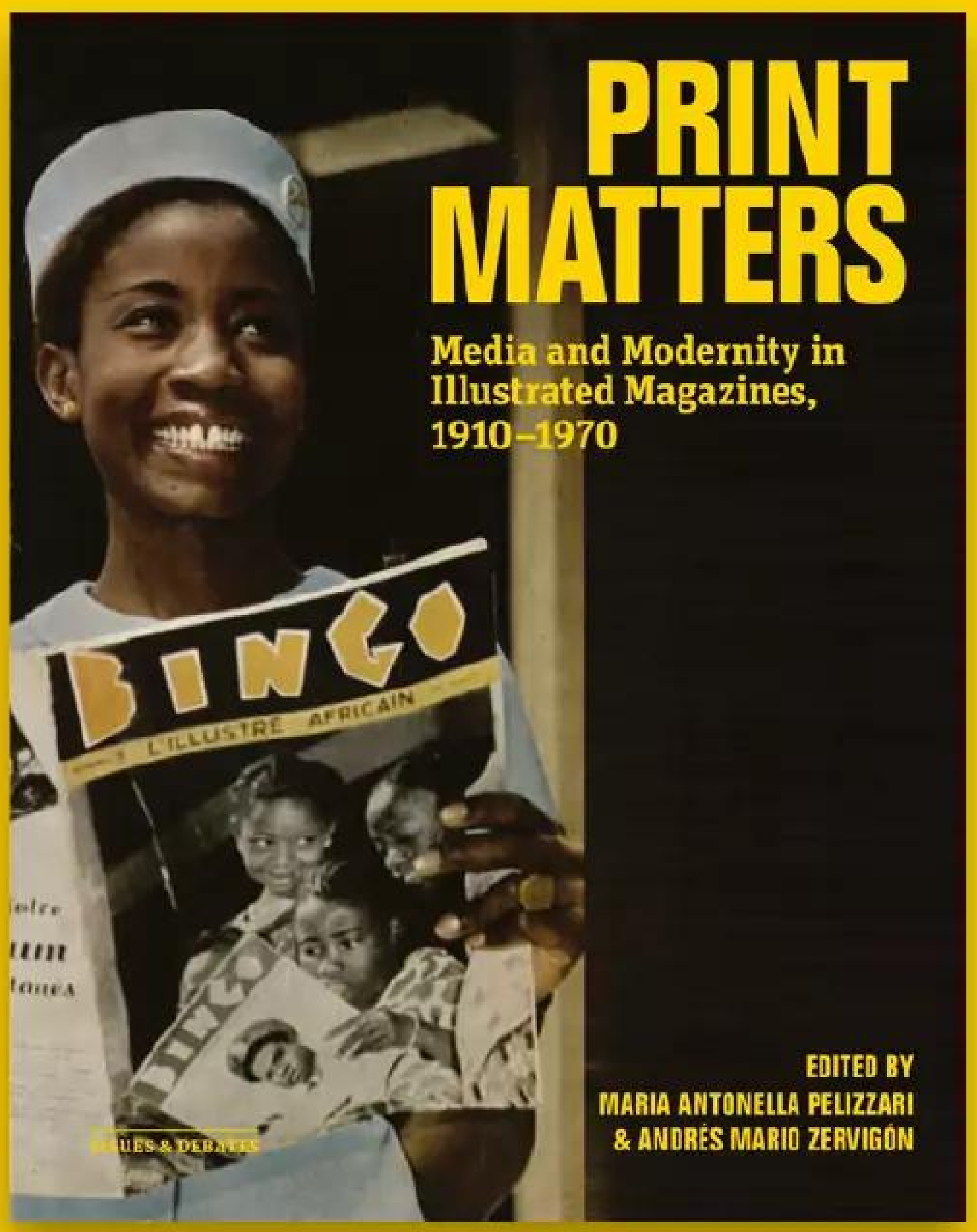
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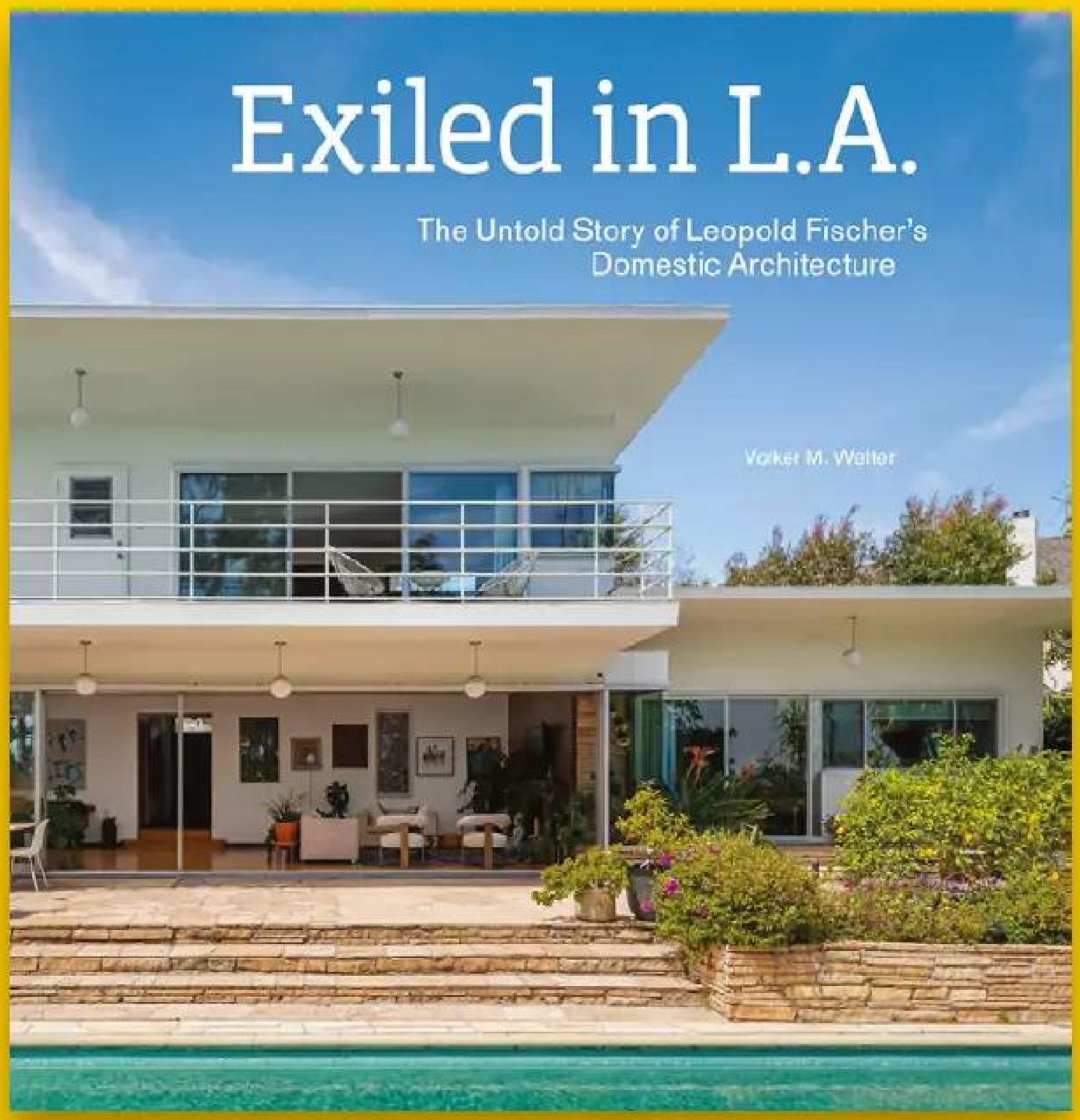
EDITED BY MARIA ANTONELLA PELIZZARI & ANDRÉS MARIO ZERVIGÓN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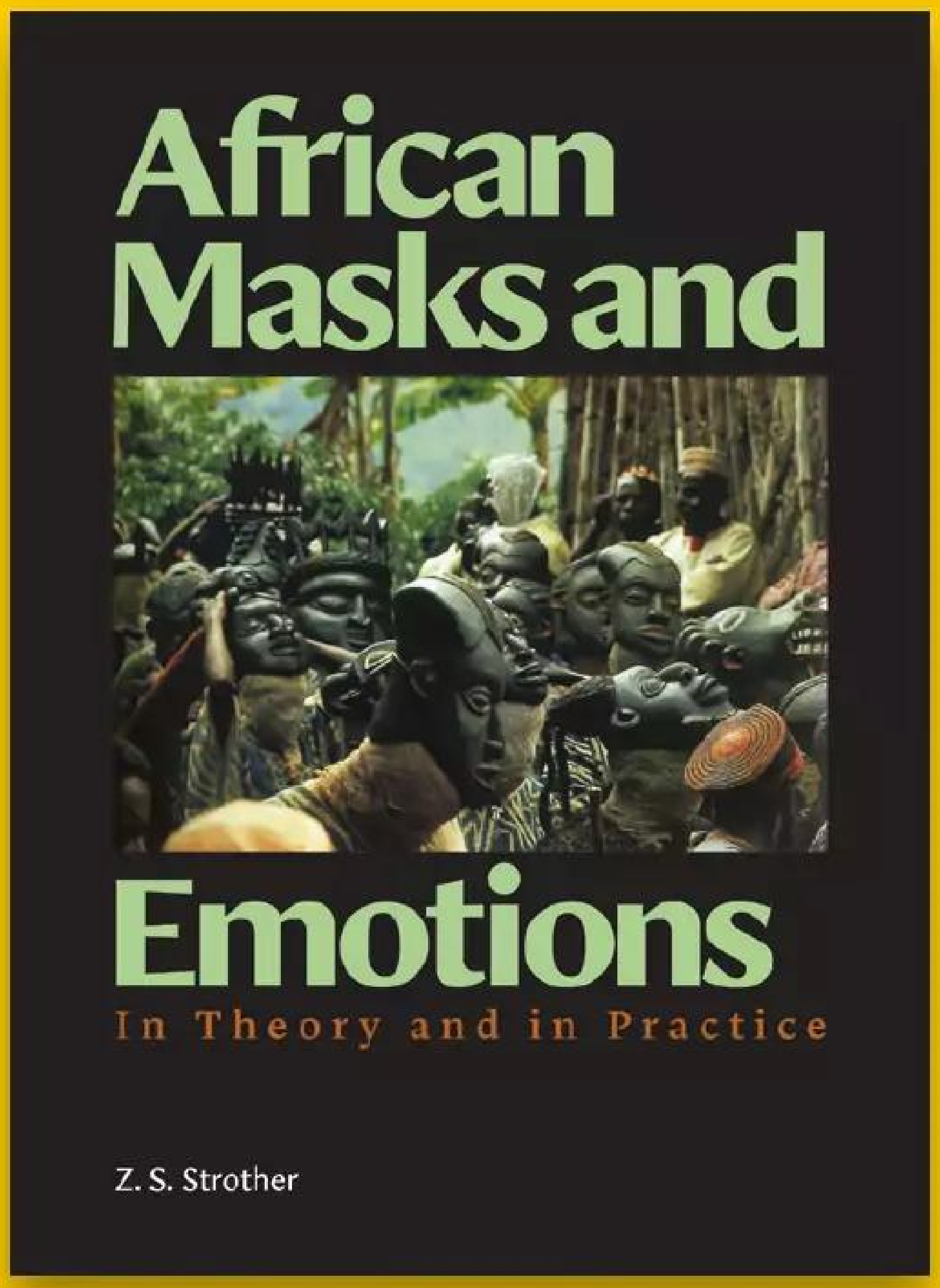
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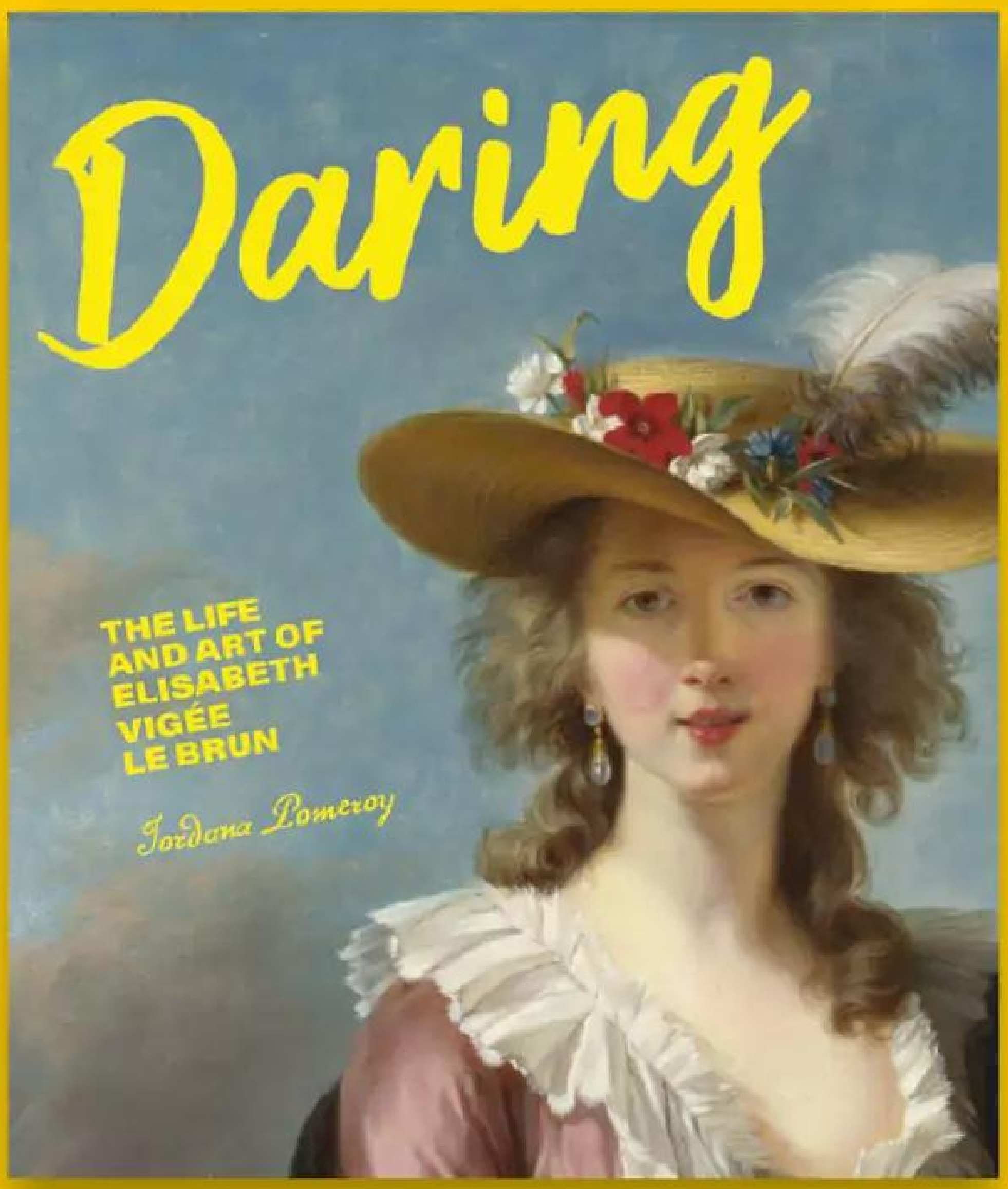
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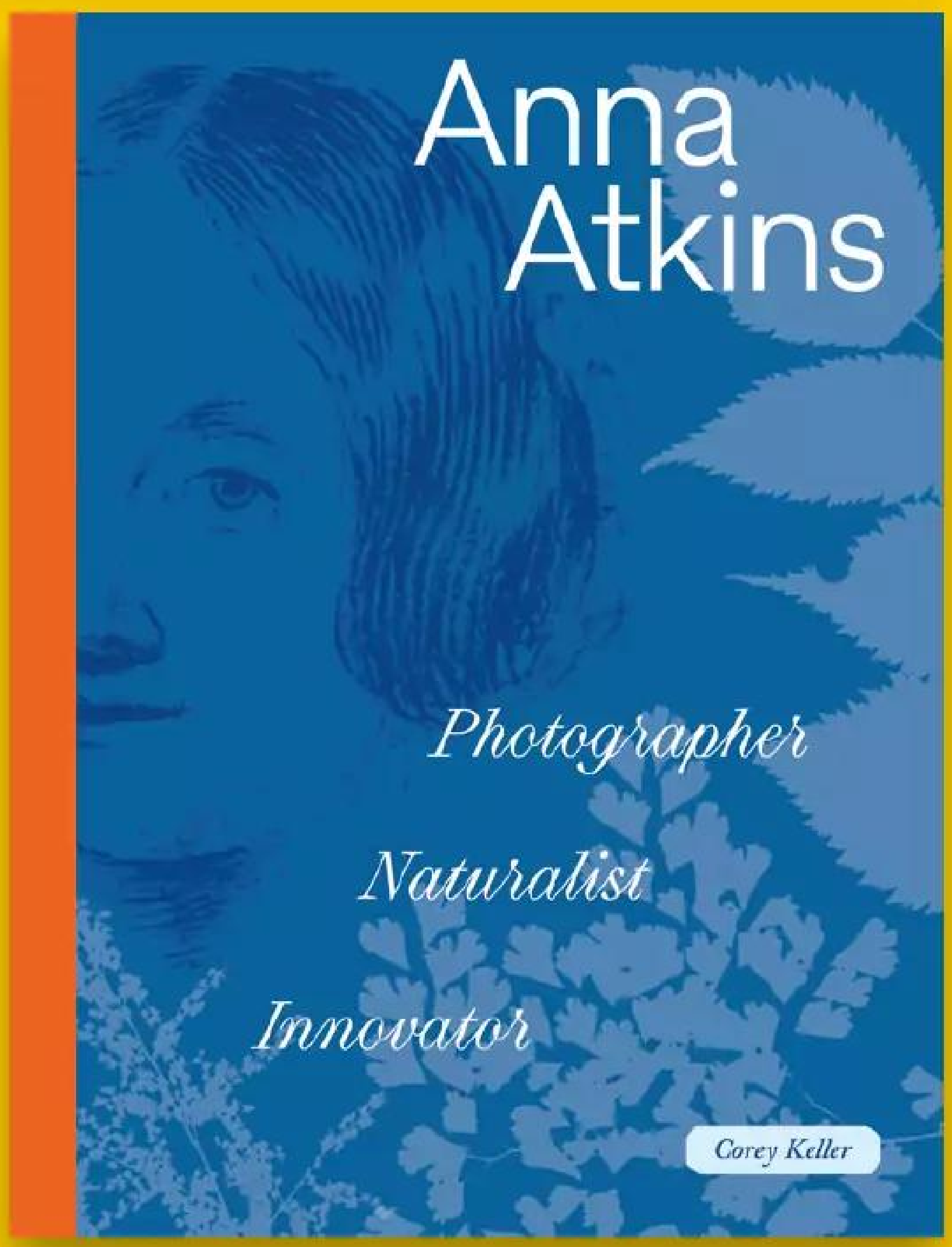
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Photographer
Naturalist
Innovator
Corey Keller

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Warrior-Princes of Mycenaean Greece

Edited by Sharon R. Stocker, Claire L. Lyons, Jack L. Davis, and Evangelia Militsi-Kechagia

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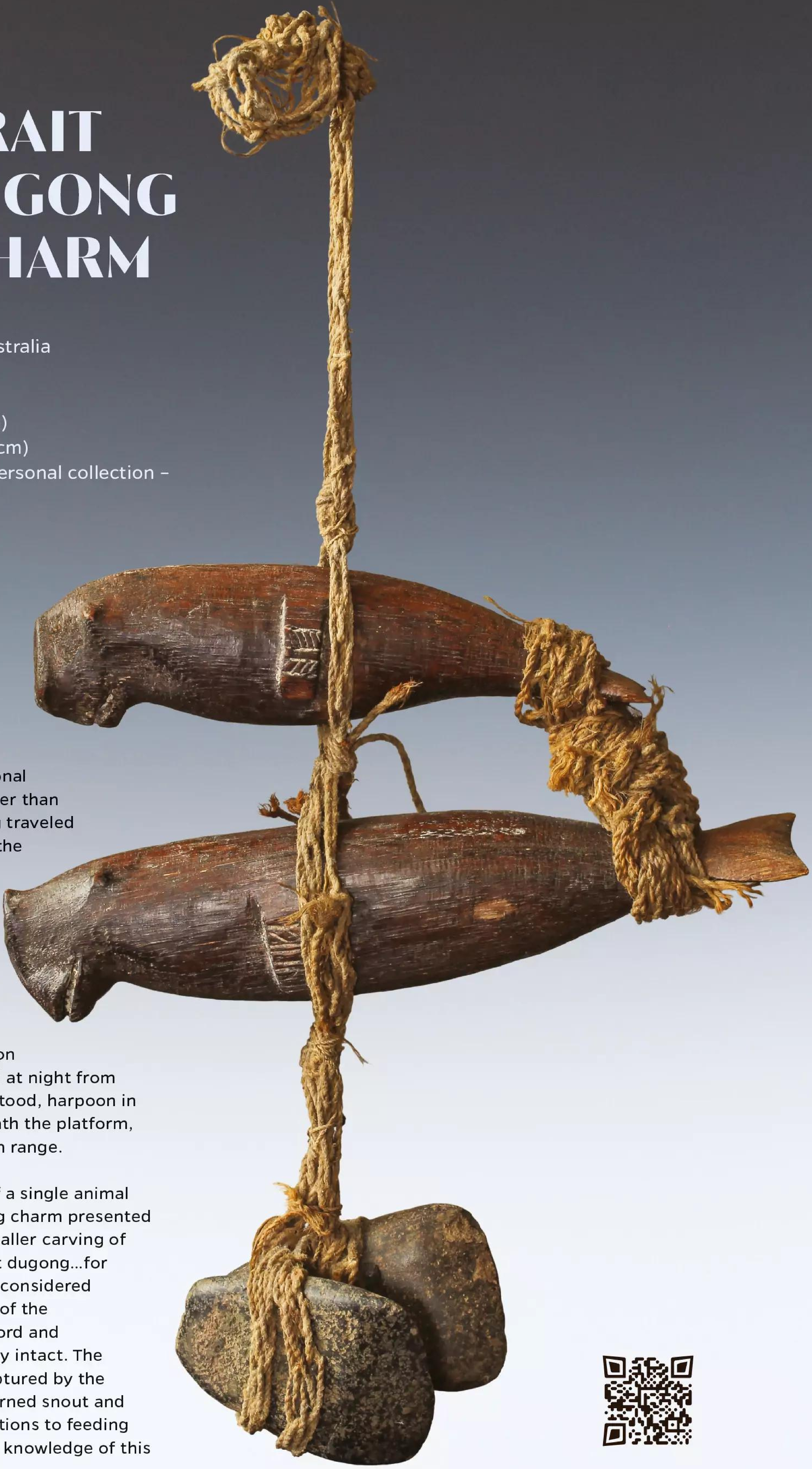
TORRES STRAIT ISLANDS DUGONG HUNTING CHARM

Torres Strait, Cape York Peninsula, Australia
Early to Mid-19th century
Hardwood, sennit, stone
Height as pictured: 16.5 inches (42 cm)
Length of lower dugong: 9 inches (23 cm)
Provenance: Chris and Anna Thorpe personal collection – Sydney, Australia
$29,500.-

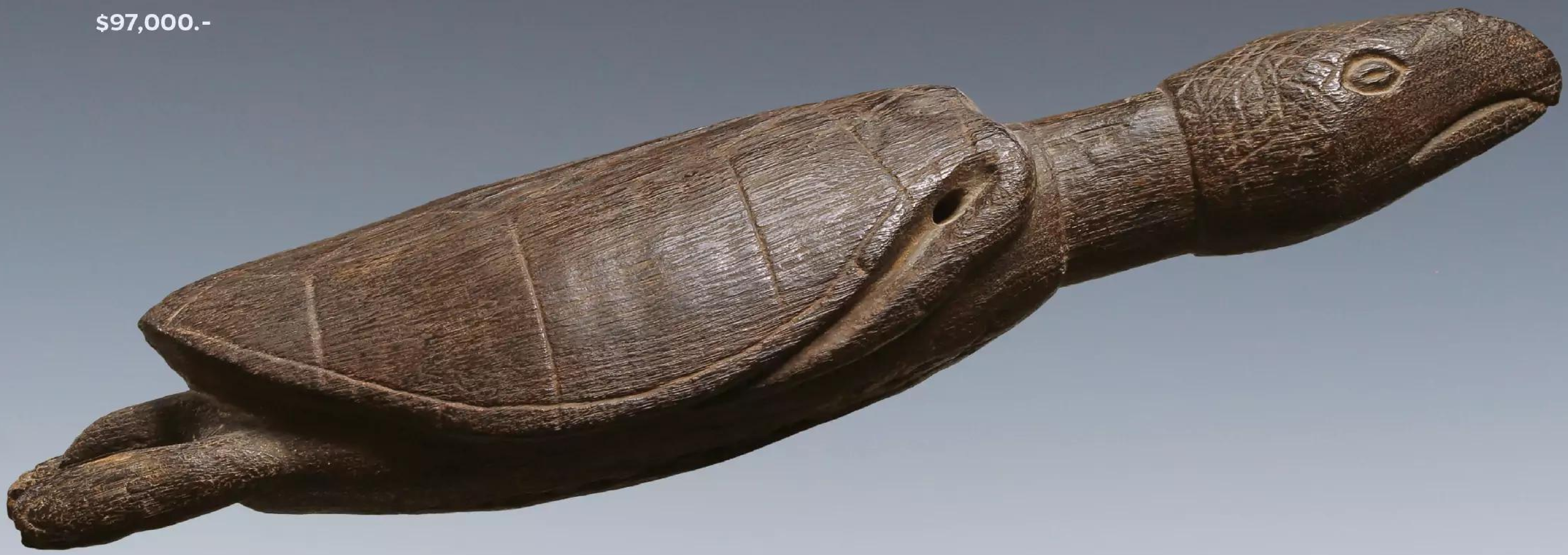


Many Western Pacific peoples hunted dugongs, large marine mammals related to the manatee. For the islanders of the Torres Strait, the dugong was an animal of great significance, providing both an important source of protein, and serving as a sacred totemic animal within traditional rites and rituals. Reaching lengths greater than nine feet, or nearly three meters, dugong traveled in herds traversing the deeper waters of the strait and frequented shallow waters when feeding on marine grasses. To provide supernatural aid in the capture of these elusive animals, the Torres Strait islanders formerly created dugong hunting charms. By day, dugongs were hunted from canoes; the charms mounted or suspended from the bow, were said to point in the direction of the quarry. Dugongs were also hunted at night from offshore platforms on which the hunter stood, harpoon in hand. A dugong charm, suspended beneath the platform, helped to magically lure the animal within range.

Most surviving dugong charms consist of a single animal carved out of wood or stone. The dugong charm presented here, however, depicts two animals; a smaller carving of a calf has been positioned above an adult dugong…for catching both a dugong and her calf was considered particularly lucky. This charm is also one of the few surviving examples with the sennit cord and suspension stones still preserved and fully intact. The dugong's essence has been brilliantly captured by the artist. The subtle contours of the downturned snout and the muscular upper cleft lip, both adaptations to feeding on seagrass, reflect the carver's intimate knowledge of this sacred animal.

TORRES STRAIT ISLANDS
TURTLE HUNTING CHARM

Torres Strait, Cape York Peninsula, Australia
Early 19th century
Hardwood
Length: 13.75 inches (35 cm)
Provenance: Richard Berry – Melbourne, Australia /
Jean-Edouard Carlier – Paris
$97,000.-



THE TORRES STRAITS ISLANDS - A LIFE AQUATIC.
Named after Luis Baéz de Torres, the first Westerner to explore the sea-passage between mainland Australia and the island of New Guinea in 1606, the Torres Strait is comprised of 274 small islands that served as ancient maritime stepping stones, and were home to one of the most fascinating culture-clusters of island Melanesia. The inhabitants of the Torres Strait Islands developed a distinctive series of rich artistic traditions and powerful art forms associated with fertility, marine hunting magic, and rites of passage whereby myths were reenacted and heroic events recounted. Recognized for a proliferation of artistic production, works of art from the Torres Straits, however, are extremely rare by virtue of the small population of these scattered islands. The complex turtle shell masks of the Torres Straits are considered one of the outstanding art forms of the primitive world. In turtle shell, a medium universally prized for its beauty of color and surface, the craftsmen of the Torres Straits achieved what is unquestionably the most expressive development of this material in the entire world. To obtain these precious sections of turtle shell, Green sea turtles were harpooned or captured with the aid of magical wooden hunting charms skillfully rendered in the likeness of the turtle. Lashed to the bow of the canoe or to a long projecting stick, these hunting charms supernaturally guided the hunter's canoe towards the turtle's location. Carved from dense hardwood, the rare turtle hunting charm presented here is remarkable for its realism and fluid sculptural form. As a hunter himself, the carver would have held intimate knowledge of the animal and its movement through the undersea environment. With its flippers tucked alongside the body and feet gracefully extended behind, we are given a sense of the streamlined turtle surging forward, perhaps attempting to flee its human pursuers.

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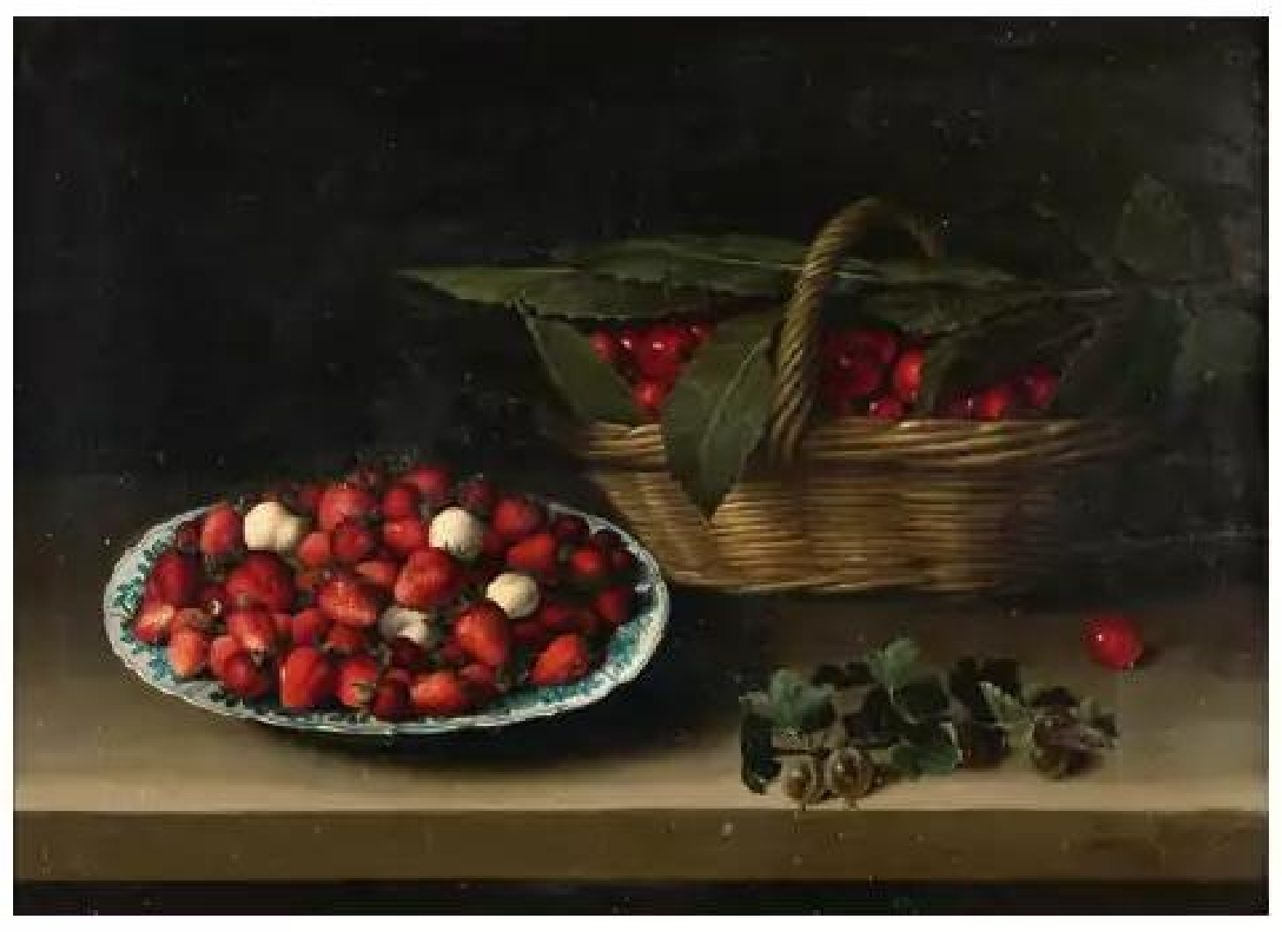

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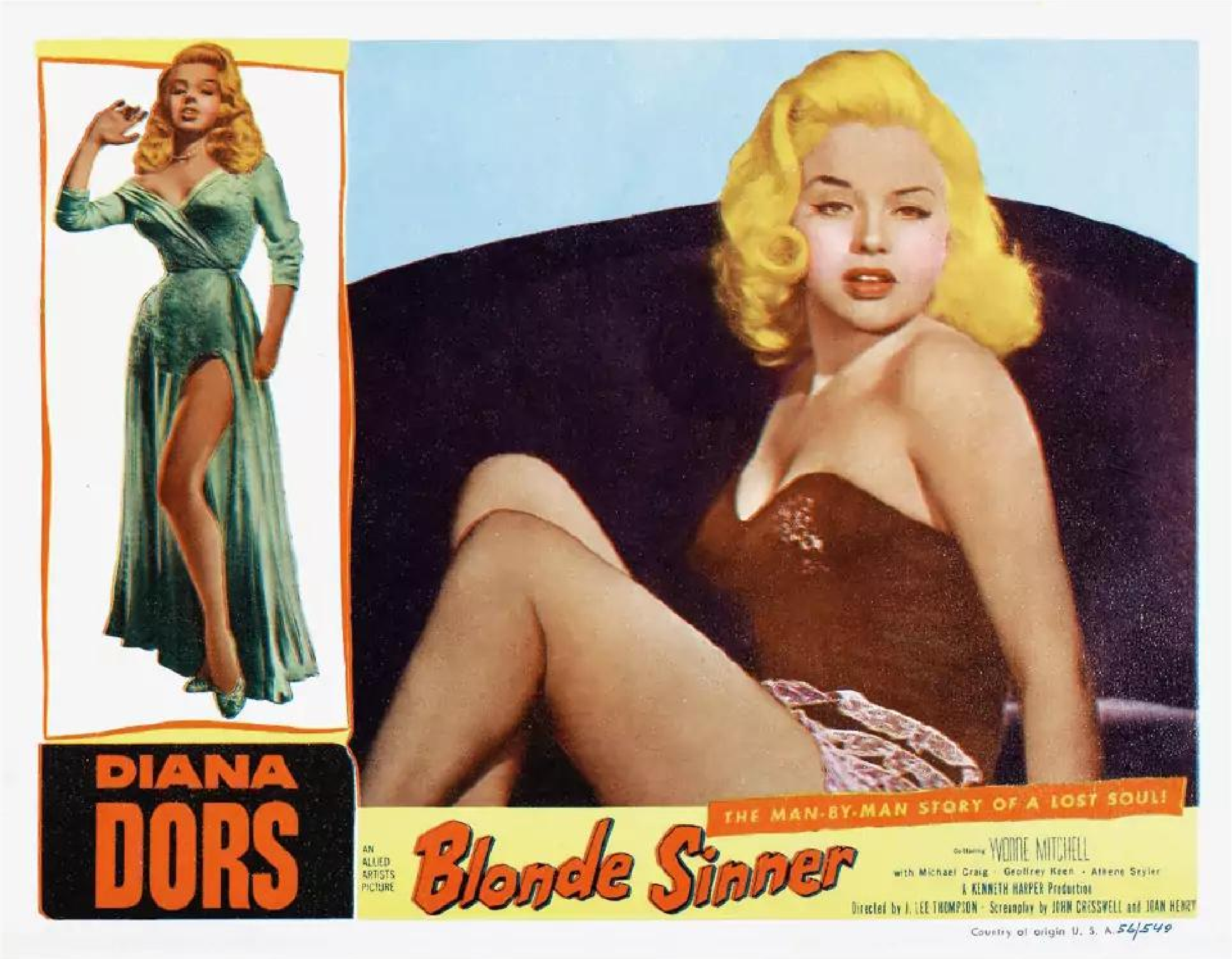

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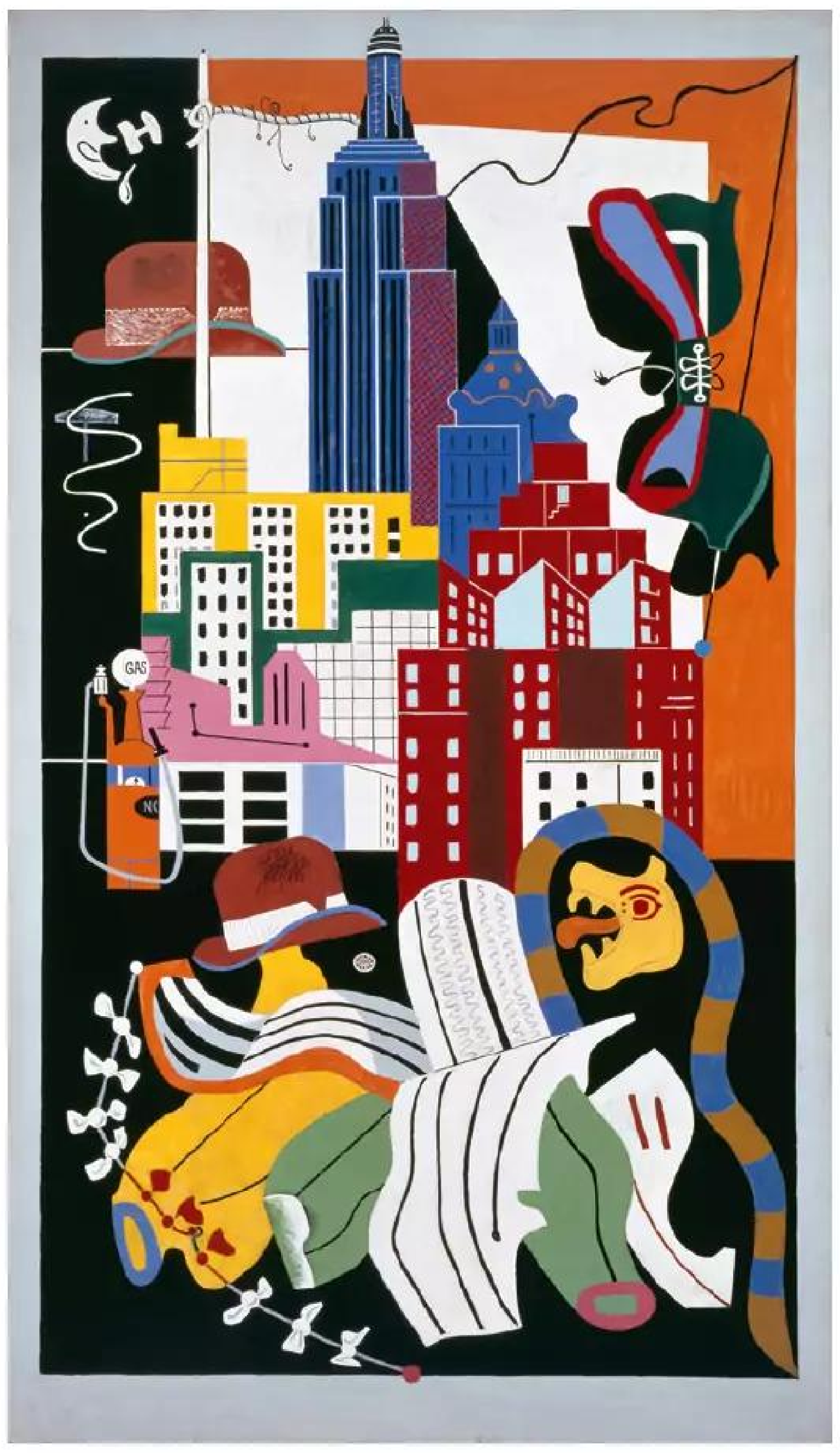

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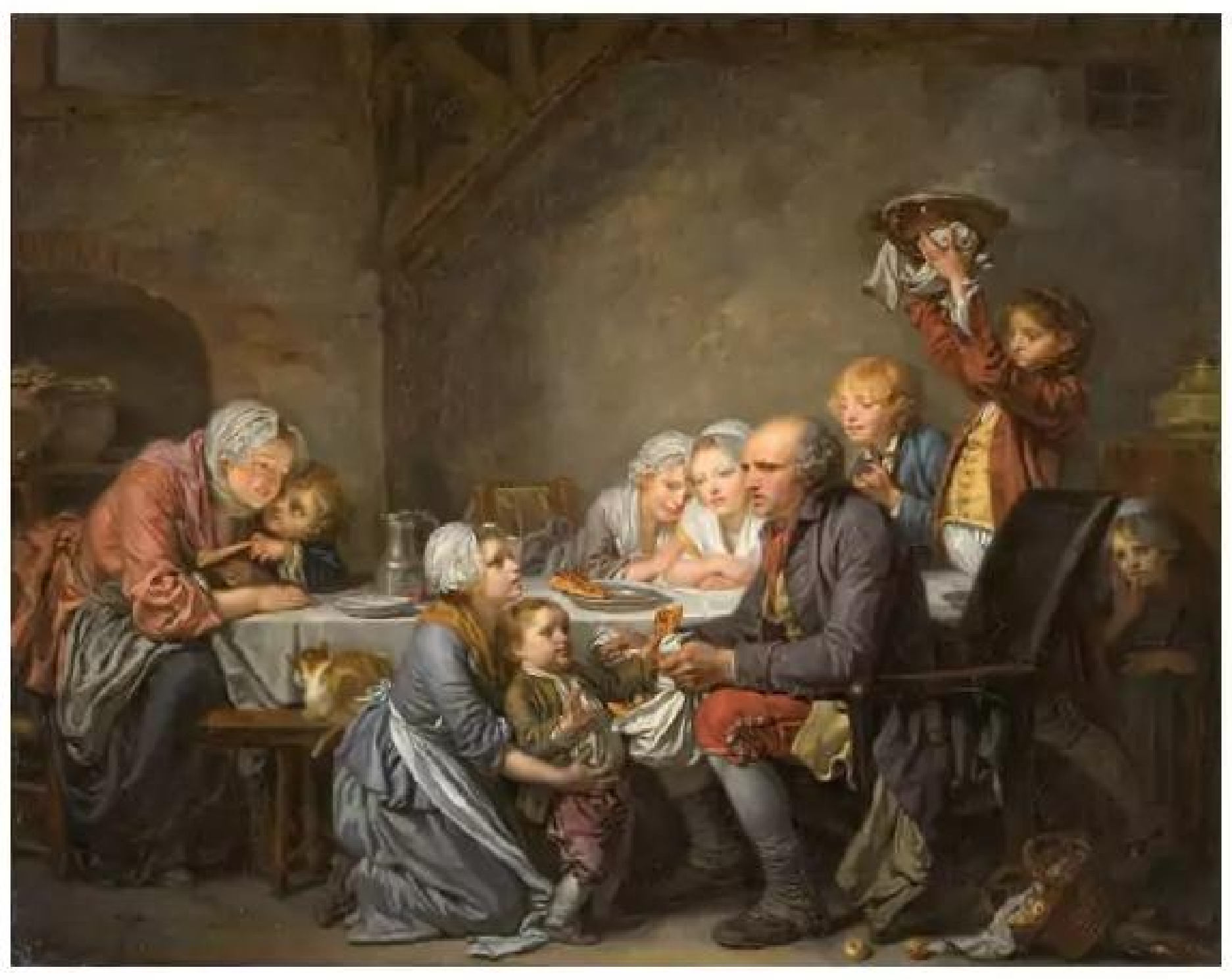

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COVER Detail of *The Holy Family with Saint John the Baptist and Saint Margaret*, c. 1488–93, Filippino Lippi (c. 1457–1504), tempera and oil on wood, diam. 153cm. Cleveland Museum of Art

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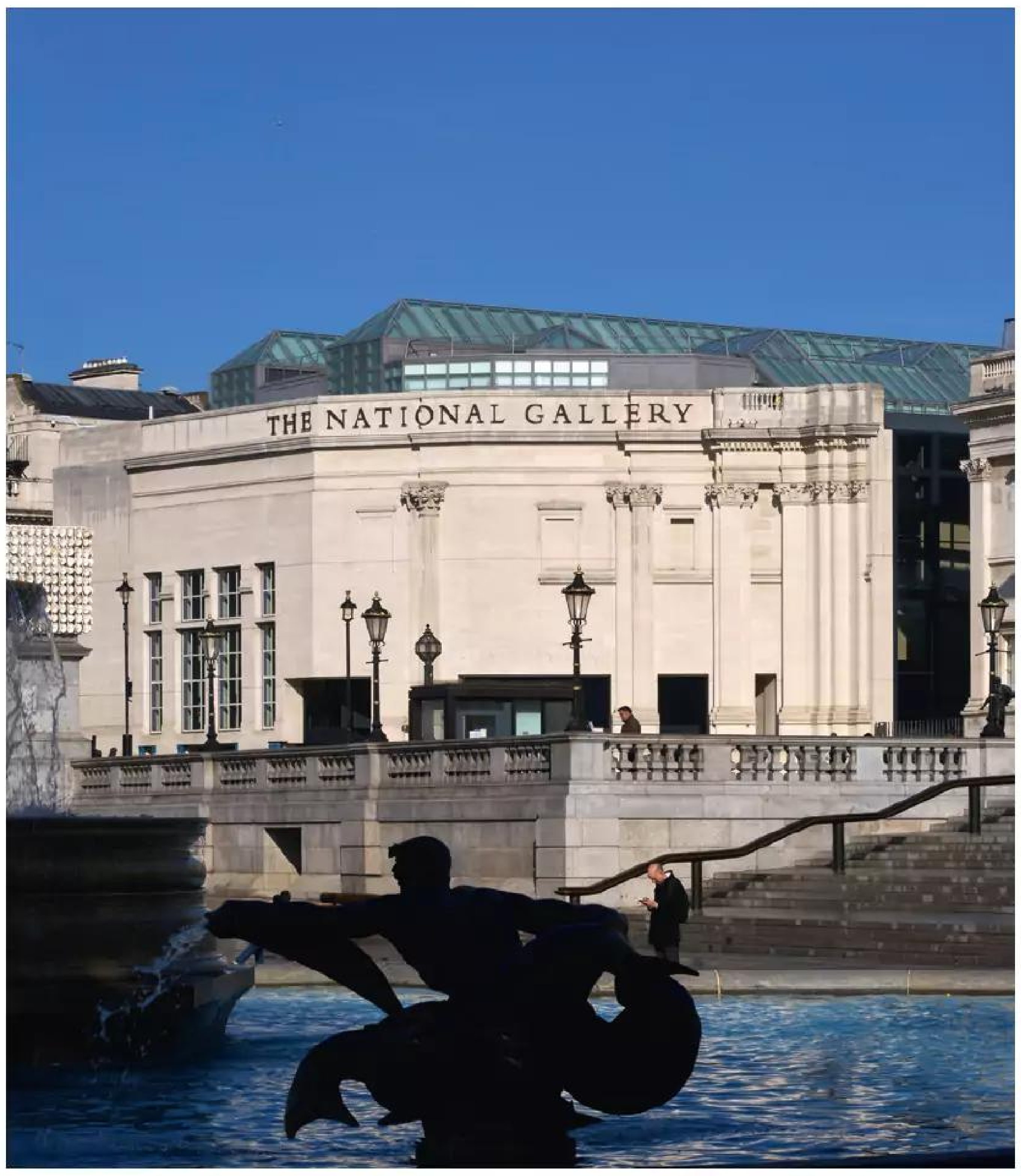


The newly refurbished Sainsbury Wing of the National Gallery. Photo: © National Gallery/ Edmund Sumner

The boards of museums in the United Kingdom rarely receive much attention. There is both good reason and tradition for this. Until about 40 years ago a board – unlike in the United States – was focused on running the museum, rather than fundraising. The idea that a British board member should personally commit to a phone-number-sized donation is still unusual. A chair rarely shapes the course of a museum as much as its director; after all, the chair's role is supposed to be non-executive.

In 2025, however, *Apollo*'s award for Personality of the Year goes to not one person but two – and one of them is the chair of the National Gallery. John Booth has held the post since 2021, an inauspicious year for museums around the world. Yet since he took over, the National has gone from strength to strength.

There are few UK institutions that will discuss their current situation cheerfully. Against a background of rising expenses, lower visitor figures and (in real terms) declining government support, it is not an easy time to work in museums. But London's National Gallery is one place where people might be smiling. This is in no small part due to the success of its 200th anniversary celebrations, masterfully steered by the joint-recipient of the Personality of the Year award, the gallery's director Gabriele Finaldi, the reopening of the Sainsbury Wing and the general triumph of the rehang of the permanent collection. But it is also due to the astonishing announcement – particularly so in this climate – that the gallery had secured the largest cash donation to a museum anywhere in the world. In fact, it managed to do so twice.

This sort of fundraising is now well within the purview of a museum chair. I remember being in the middle of a conversation at a Victoria and Albert Museum event with Nicholas Coleridge, then the V&A's chair, when a member of the development office approached to take him to talk to a potential donor. It is all in a day's work, when so much of that work is now about ensuring there's enough money in the bank to keep the lights on.

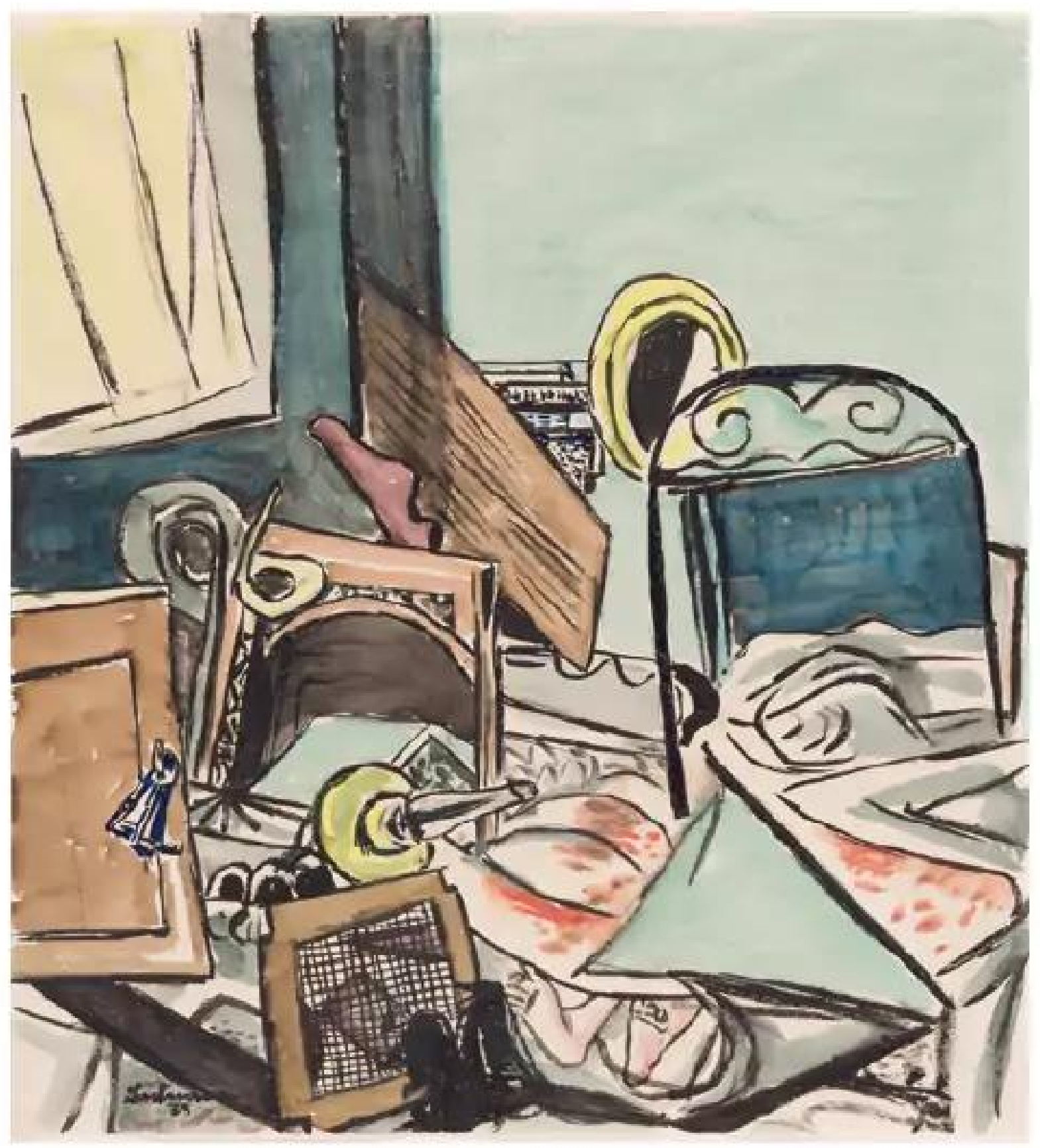
Sometimes, however, a combination of personalities arrives at the top of an organisation that allows it to reach new heights. The last time I can think of this happening at a British cultural institution is when Nicholas Hytner and Nick Starr – the two Nicks, as they became known – ran the National Theatre. They worked so well together that the NT enjoyed a rare moment of artistic success, public adoration and financial stability.

It seems like the partnership of Finaldi and Booth is heading in the same direction. Together they bring a dedication to the art and to good business: they are determined to rebuild the National Gallery into something that is set for the 21st century. The astonishingly bold attempt to build a gallery of modern and contemporary work that matches the quality of the Old Master collection might seem foolhardy to some. After this year, though, if anyone can pull it off it is these two. It is heartening to see a British museum dreaming big and then finding a way to make that dream a reality. But it is also testament to how museums function well when they have the right people in the right roles. Doing the everyday things well is what makes big things possible. That is something worth rewarding.

EDWARD BEHRENS,
EDITOR

AGENDA

Apollo's exhibitions of the month



1

Beckmann

Städel Museum, Frankfurt
3 December–15 March 2026

Coinciding with the publication of the first catalogue raisonné of Max Beckmann's drawings, this exhibition in Frankfurt presents more than 80 drawings, including early preparatory sketches from the museum's collection that have rarely been on public display as well as loans from international institutions. Highlights include *The Murder* (pictured), a macabre illustration of a crime scene, painted in 1933, in which Beckmann seems to foreshadow the violence and chaos that would consume Germany in subsequent years.

2

Art around 1800

Hamburger Kunsthalle
5 December–29 March 2026

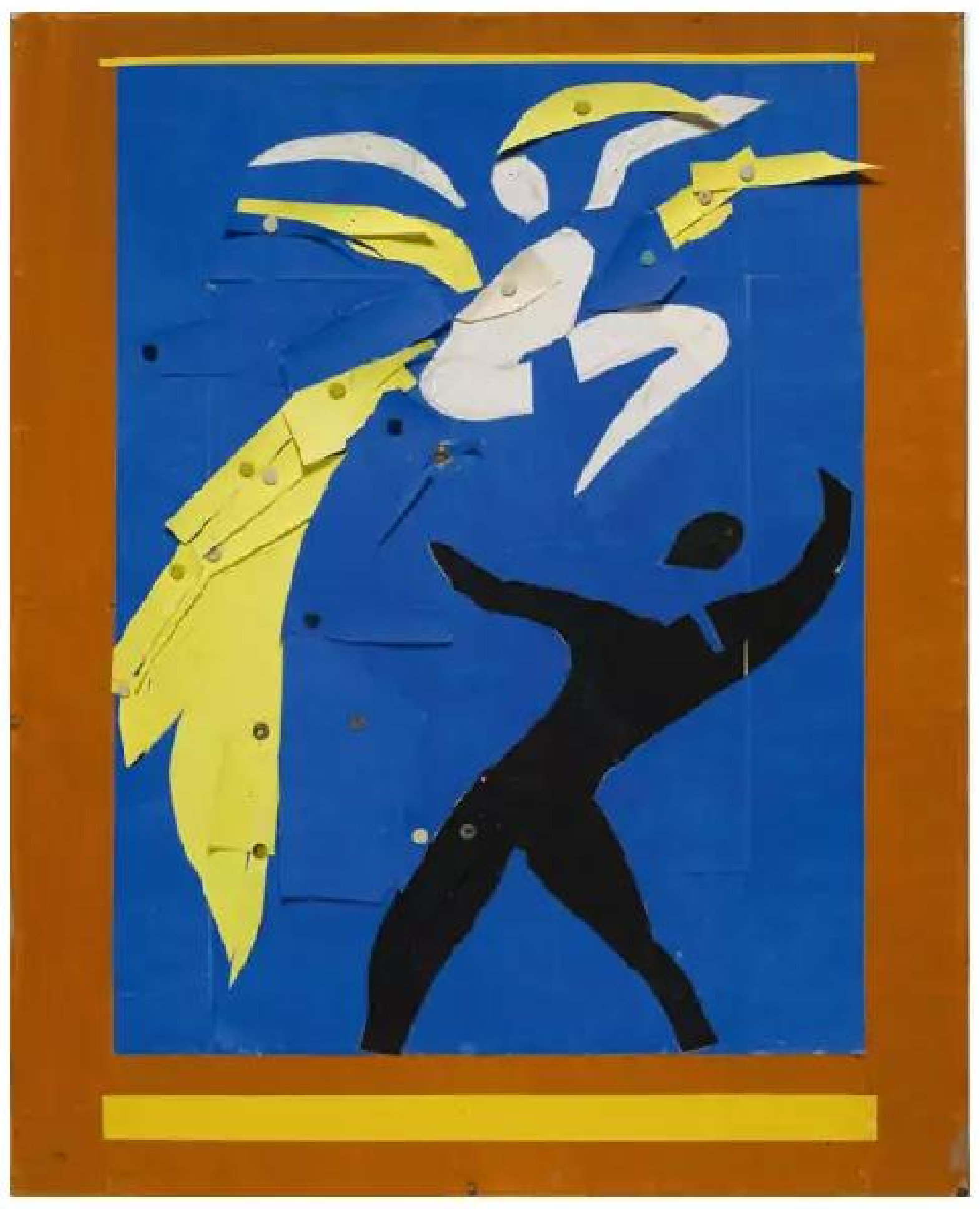
Billed as an 'exhibition about exhibitions', this show reprises a series that took place at the gallery between 1974 and 1981 focusing on early 19th-century art. Contemporary and previously excluded works are shown with historic displays of books, drawings and paintings.

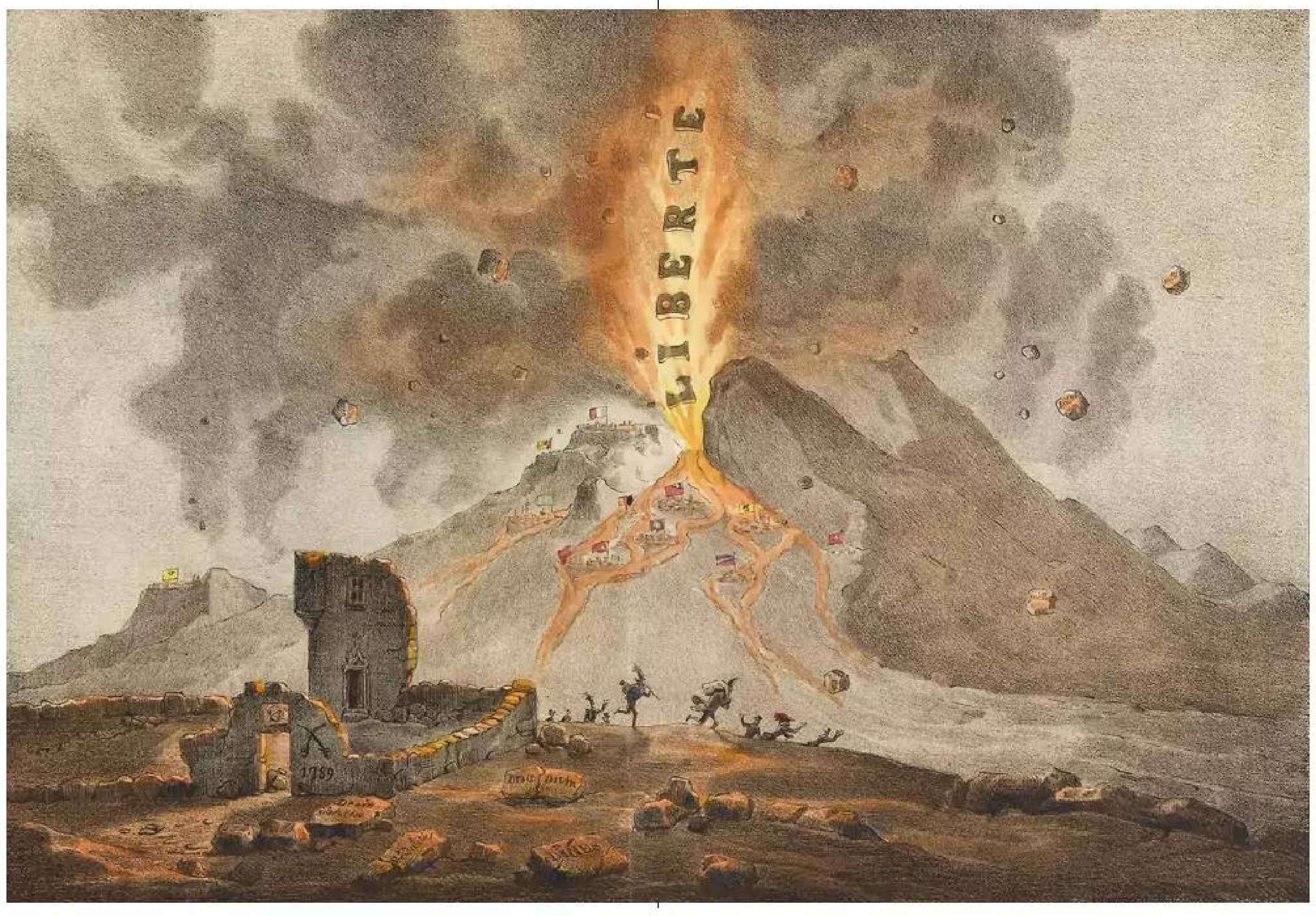
3

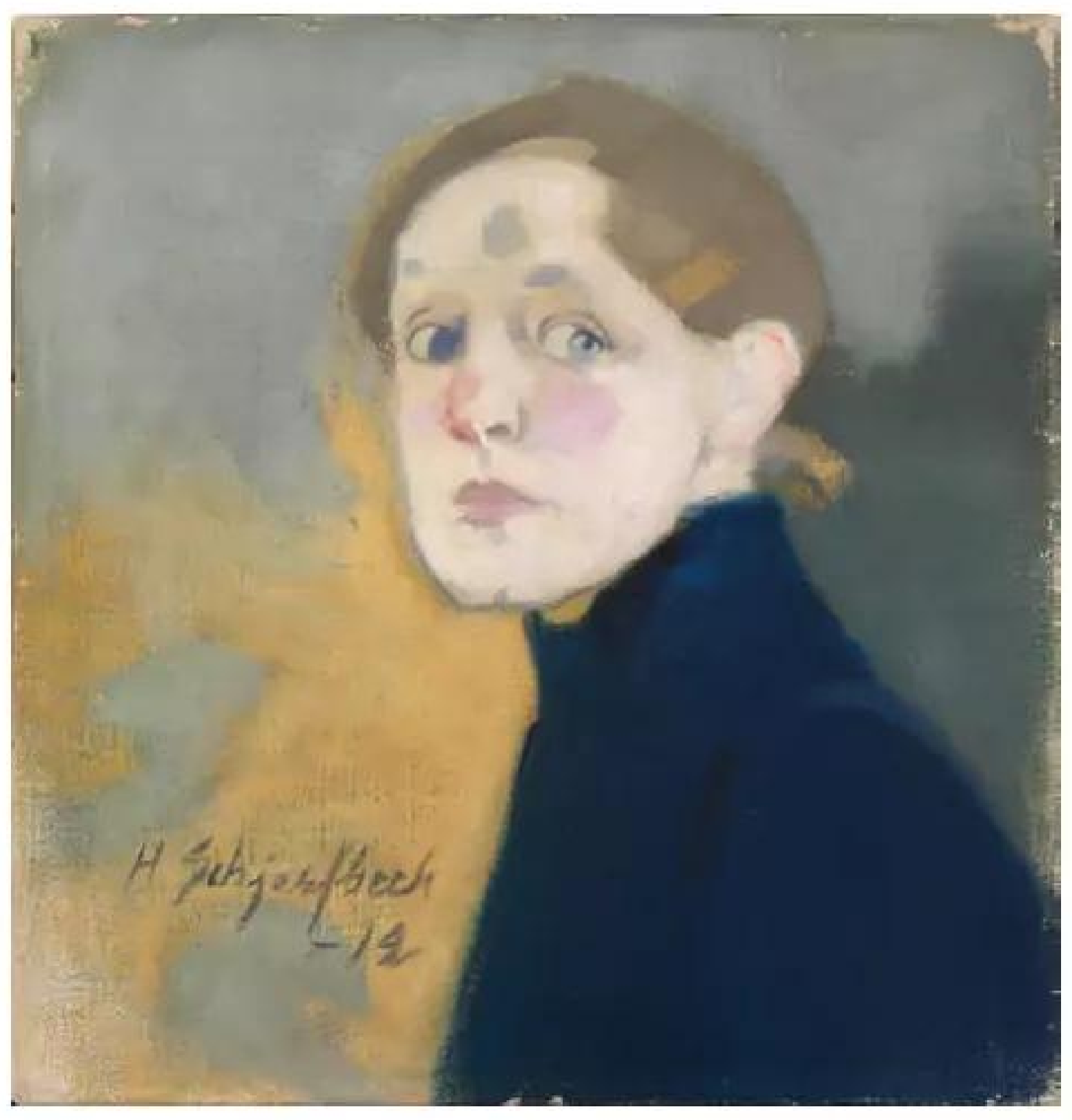
Drawing Outside the Lines: Masterpieces from the Centre Pompidou's Collection

Grand Palais, Paris
16 December–15 March 2026

The Centre Pompidou in Paris is closed for renovation for the next five years, but that doesn't mean that its collection has been tucked away in storage. The museum's 'Constellation' programme is taking works to institutions in France and beyond: this exhibition of graphic art produced between 1900 and today comprises some 300 works on paper by 120 artists, including Matisse (pictured), Picasso and Chagall.





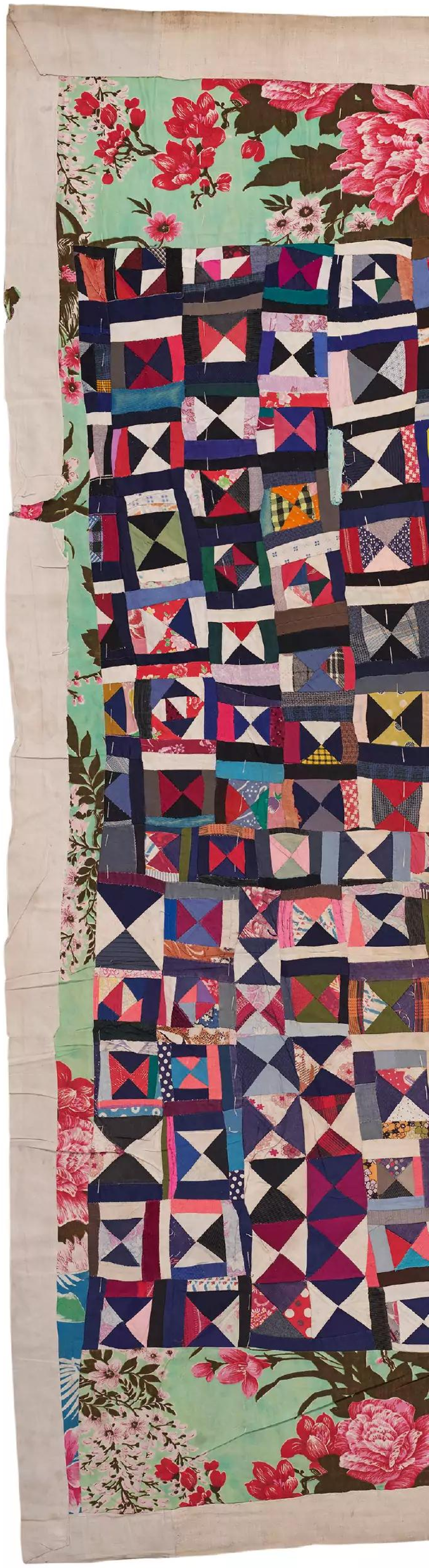


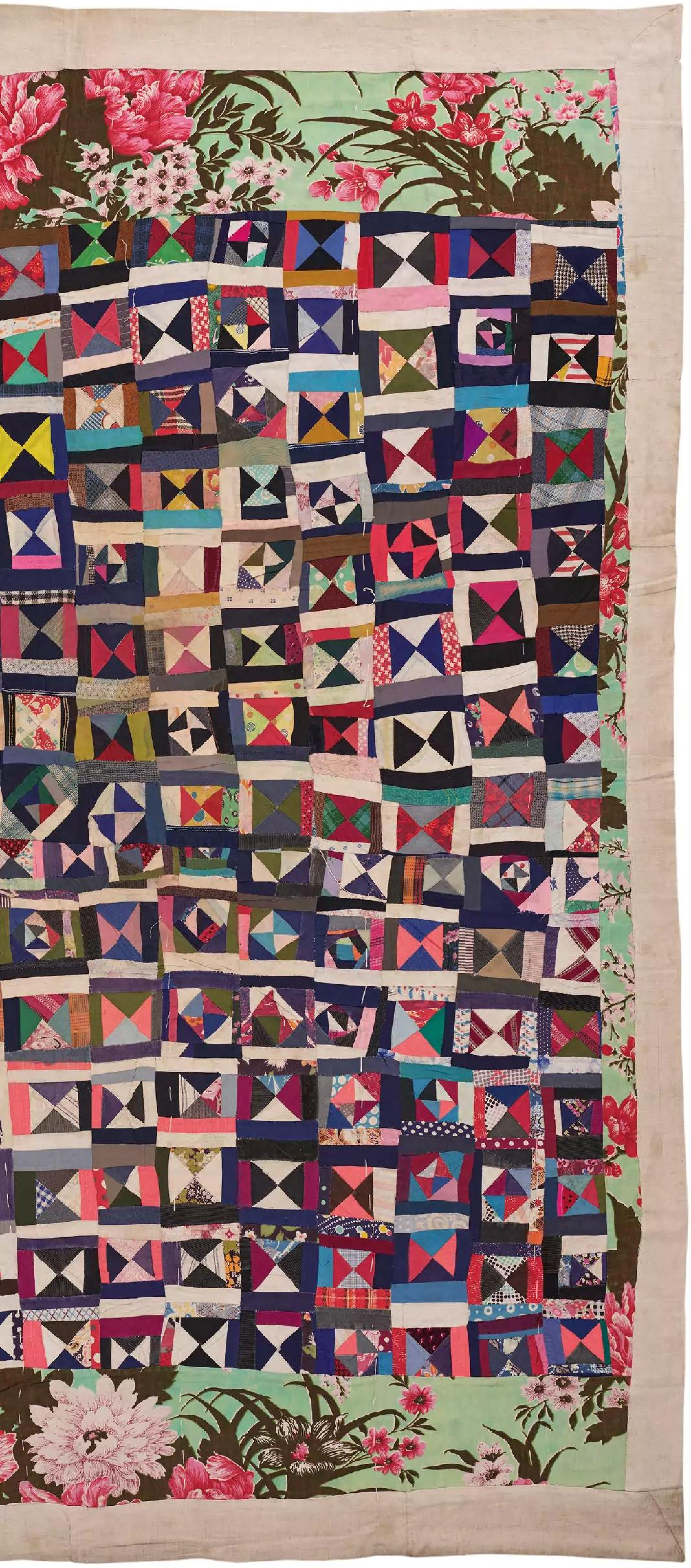
4

Seeing Silence: The Paintings of Helene Schjerfbeck

Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
5 December–5 April 2026

Despite her acclaim in the Nordic countries, where she is regarded as one of the most important Finnish painters of the 20th century, Schjerfbeck is considerably less well-known abroad. This is the first major presentation of Schjerfbeck's work in the United States, featuring some 60 paintings created throughout her six-decade career. These range from naturalistic domestic scenes painted during her adolescence to the pared-back, melancholic portraits for which she became feted in later life.





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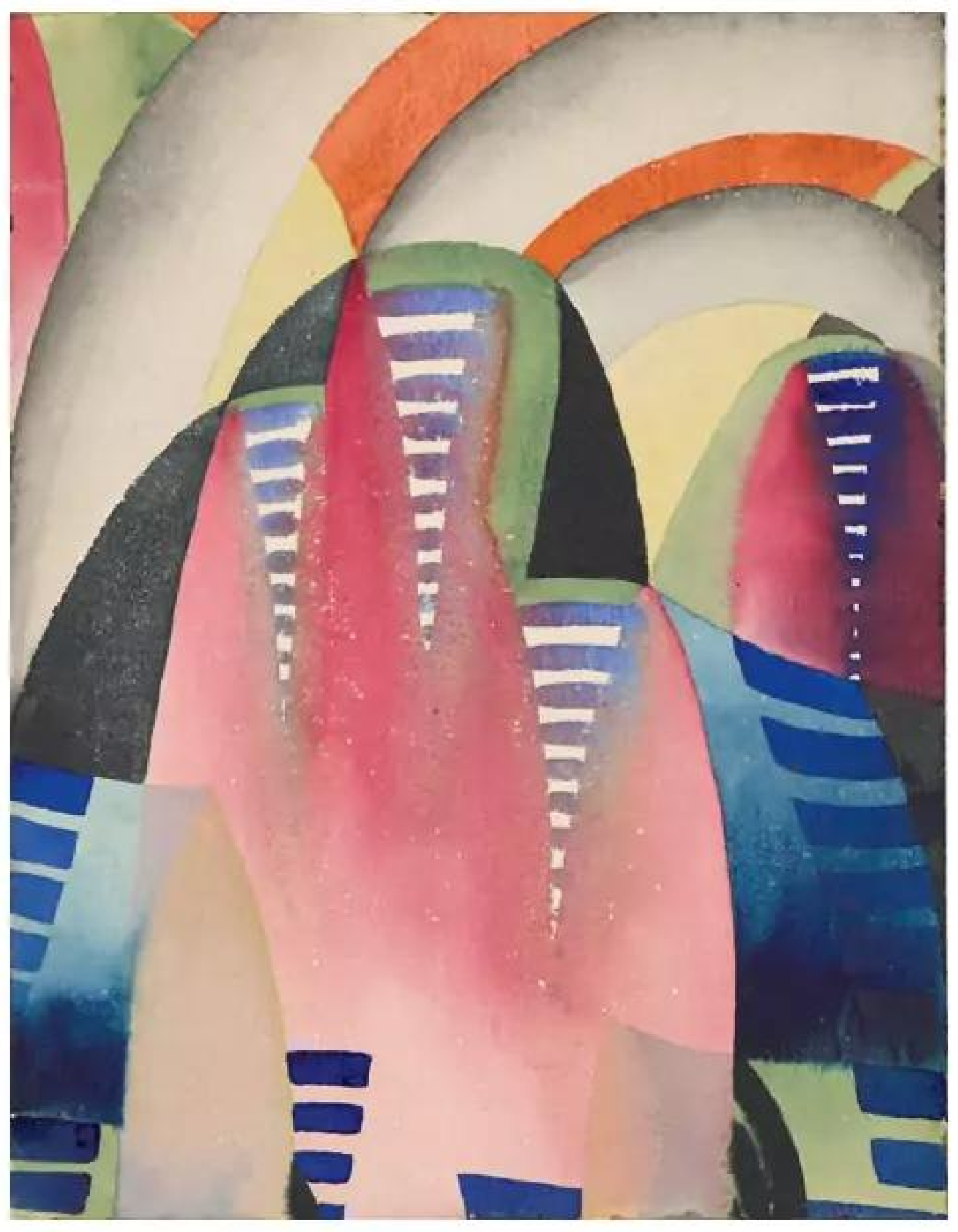
5

One Hundred Stitches, One Hundred Villages: The Beauty of Patchwork from Rural China

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
6 December–3 May 2026

The proliferation of patchwork textiles from rural China has its origins in the practice of Buddhist and Daoist monks, who would clothe themselves in second-hand fabrics as an act of resourcefulness and humility. Today, these kaleidoscopic textiles – used as everything from curtains and bed covers to wall decorations – are often considered works of art in their own right. Twenty exceptional examples, rarely seen outside the Chinese villages in which they were made, are presented in this exhibition.



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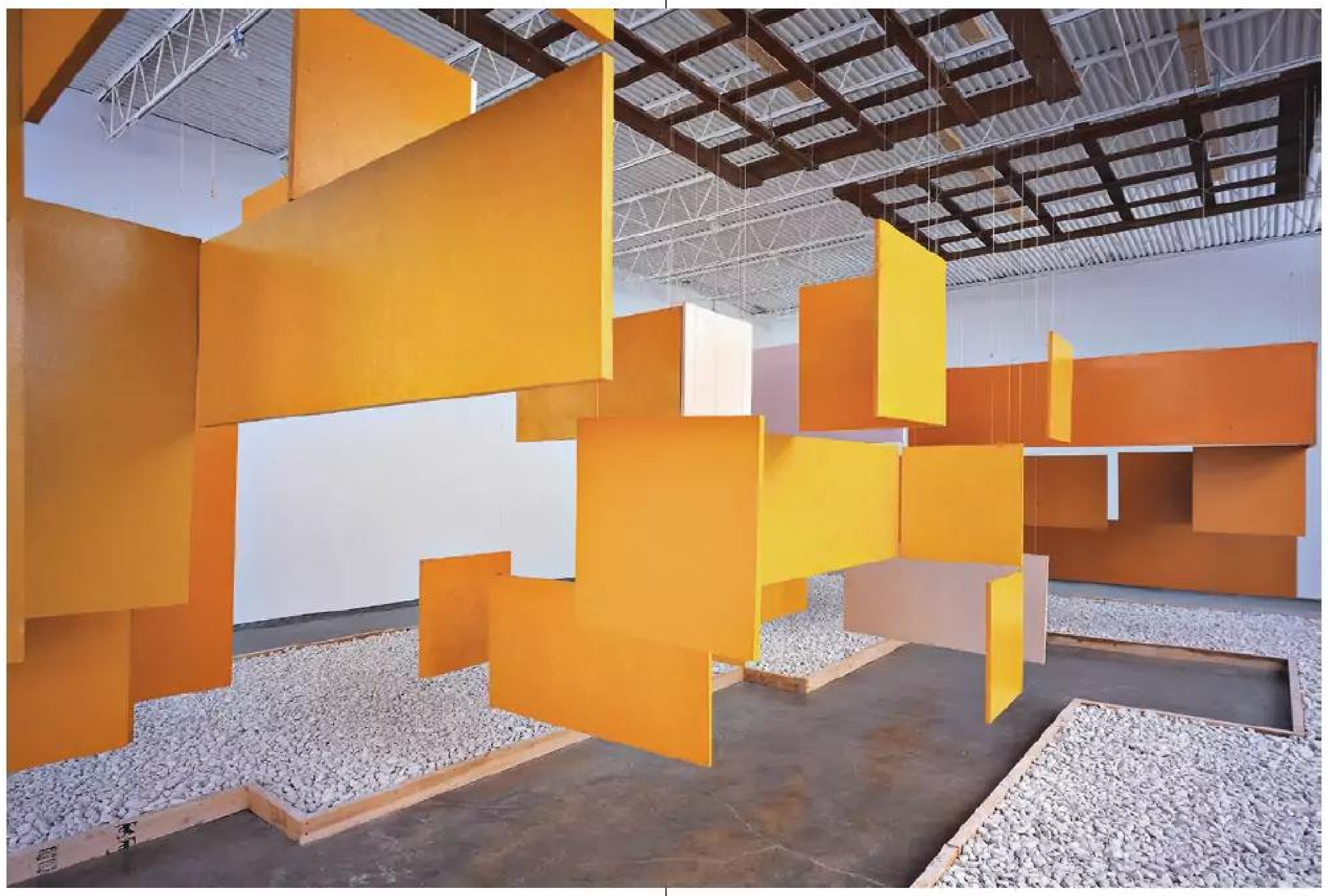
Bruce Goff: Material Worlds

Art Institute of Chicago
20 December–29 March 2026

Goff's futuristic and flamboyant buildings were the antithesis of the sleek minimalist designs that dominated in the mid 20th century, earning him the nickname 'Michelangelo of kitsch' from fellow architect Charles Jencks. The first exhibition of Goff's architectural drawings and models in 30 years also presents personal ephemera.



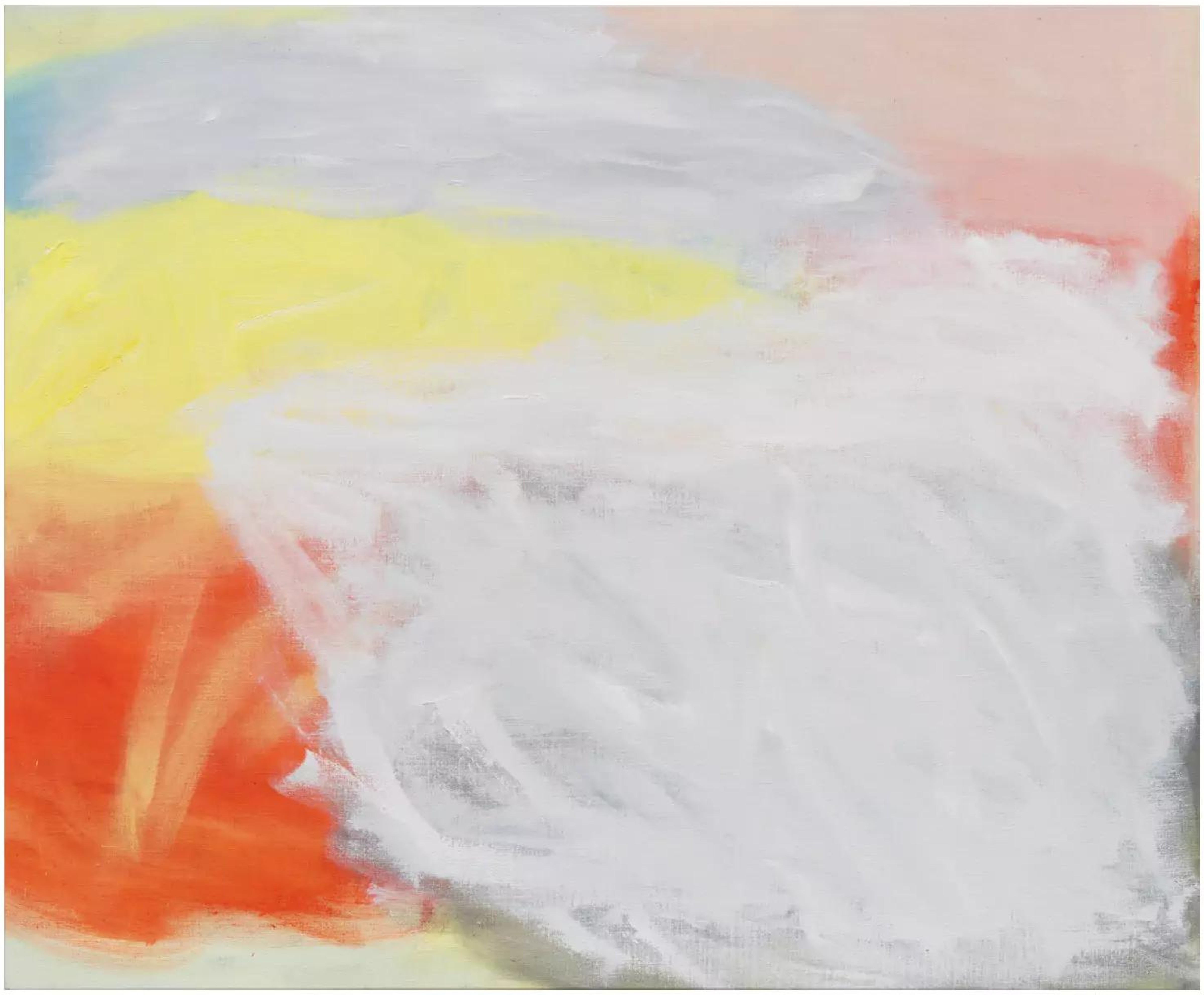
7

Hélio Oiticica

Dia Beacon, New York
5 December–November 2026

Oiticica was a key exponent of Neo-Concretism, a movement founded in Brazil in the 1950s by artists including Lygia Clark and Lygia Pape that encouraged viewers to interact with works of art. At the centre of this exhibition is *Grand Nucleus* (1960–63; pictured). Consisting of a maze of panels painted in yellows and oranges that are suspended from the ceiling, the structure invites us to wander through it, dissolving the barrier between audience and artwork.

Art Basel Miami Beach



August, 2025, Jongsuk Yoon (b. 1965), oil on canvas, 140 × 170cm. Leeahn Gallery, Seoul

With almost 300 galleries in attendance, this sun-drenched fair is the largest in the western hemisphere, writes **MICHAEL DELGADO**

When the majority of art-market centres are wrapping up for the year – and sheltering from the cold – Art Basel Miami Beach aims to keep a little of the summer atmosphere going. The weather in Florida tends to be sunny even in December, and the gallery parties are, if not quite as big a draw as the art, then certainly a close second.

For Bridget Finn, who became director of the fair last year, the location is also a strategic one in terms of what is on show. 'Miami Beach is sort of the geographical and cultural nexus between North and South and Central America,' she says, a fact that is reflected in both the visitors that come to the fair and the make-up of artists and galleries. More than two-thirds of participating galleries this year come from North, South and Central America or the Caribbean.

With almost 300 galleries coming this year, the fair is the largest in the western hemisphere. Yet the gargantuan Convention Center ensures there is no cramming going on; on the contrary, Finn says, the booths are huge and for many galleries, Miami Beach is the place to 'expand' their curatorial presentations into large-scale, 'ambitious programming'. This is true of the booths in Galleries, the bread-and-butter section of the fair, but also of those in Meridians, the sculpture section – curated by Yasmil Raymond for the second year running – which Finn points to as a place where some of the most exciting and interactive work will be shown. This year, Finn has put her faith in youth, bringing Nova – dedicated to art made in the last three years – and Positions – the fair's section for young and emerging galleries – right up to the entrance.

Among Finn's must-see picks are the work of Robert Colescott at Jenkins Johnson Gallery's booth and Mazzoleni's display of frantic, quasi-cubist paintings by the 20th-century Cuban artist Wifredo Lam – currently the subject of a larger exhibition at MoMA in New York, which is on until 11 April 2026. Perhaps her standout pick, however, is at Roberts Projects, which is hosting a brand-new installation made by the sculptor and printmaker Betye Saar, who turns 100 in July next year.

There is much going on in and around the art, too – the Conversations section, for instance, which comprises three days of live talks and debates, as well as the launch of Zero 10, a new platform for digital art. Finn stresses that artists are always at the heart of the fair. 'I think we get through complicated times with artists leading the narrative,' she says. 'Having 20 years under my belt of working with artists, that has always been extremely apparent to me.'

Art Basel Miami Beach takes place in the Miami Beach Convention Center from 5–7 December (artbasel.com/miami-beach).

Grave stele of a reclining man, Cyprus, early Classical Period (second half of the 5th century BCE). Said to be "from a necropolis" at Salamis, Cyprus. Limestone with red paint. Collection of Luigi Palma di Cesnola; purchased by The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1874–1876; Anderson Galleries sale, purchased by John Ringling, 1928; bequest of John Ringling, 1936. SN28.1910

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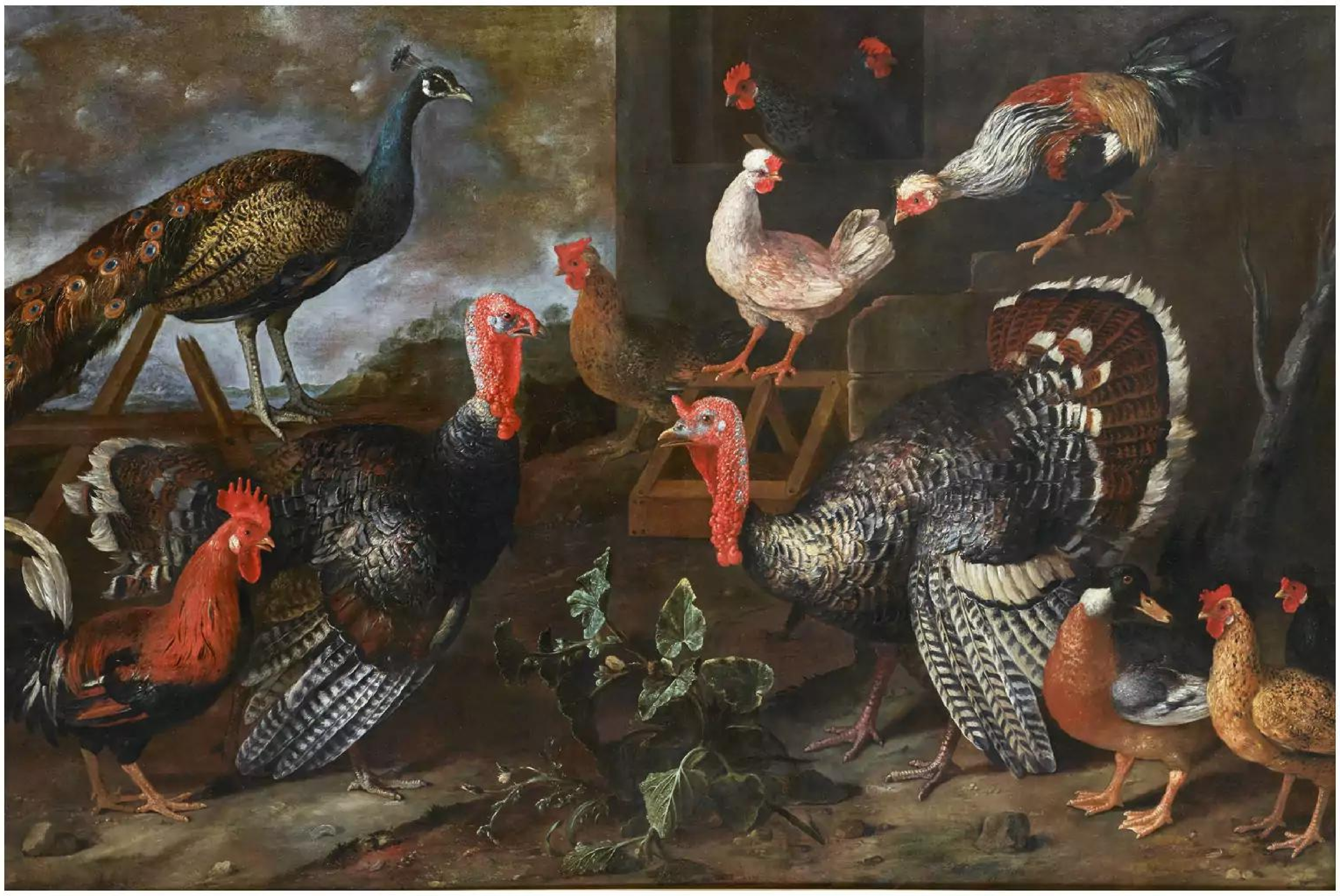


Turkeys, Chickens and a Peacock in a Courtyard, c. 1730, Pietro Neri Scacciati (1684–1749), oil on canvas, 170 × 240cm. Rafael Valls, London

Birds & Beasts
Until 19 December
Rafael Valls, London

Between the 17th and the 19th centuries animal painting flourished in Europe, as people encountered creatures from the New World, Asia and Oceania for the first time. This exhibition includes works by artists such as Jan Weenix and Melchior d'Hondecoeter; a highlight is an especially atmospheric painting by the Liverpudlian artist William Huggins of two wary pumas.

Barbara Wesołowska: Empty Night
Until 31 January 2026
Michael Werner, London

The figures in Wesołowska's paintings are obscured by layers of brown and ochre paint; often these layers are so dominant that the works come to seem entirely abstract. Wesołowska has long been drawn to Sigmund Freud: the titles of several pieces in this exhibition refer to his writings, and her paintings bring to mind his theories of buried trauma and the uncertainty of memory.

The House on Utopia Parkway: Joseph Cornell's Studio Reimagined by Wes Anderson
16 December–14 March 2026
Gagosian, Paris

Cornell is best known for his 'shadow boxes', which contain a variety of small objects he collected and curated himself. These works are at once playful and moving, so it makes sense that Wes Anderson – whose appeal rests on his ability to pack an emotional punch while carefully arranging his *mise en scène* – has curated, alongside Jasper Sharp, this show, in which the duo has transformed Gagosian's Paris gallery into a life-size shadow box.

Piero Manzoni: 'L'Invincible Jean' and Early Works 1956–1957
Until 14 February 2026
Hauser & Wirth, Basel

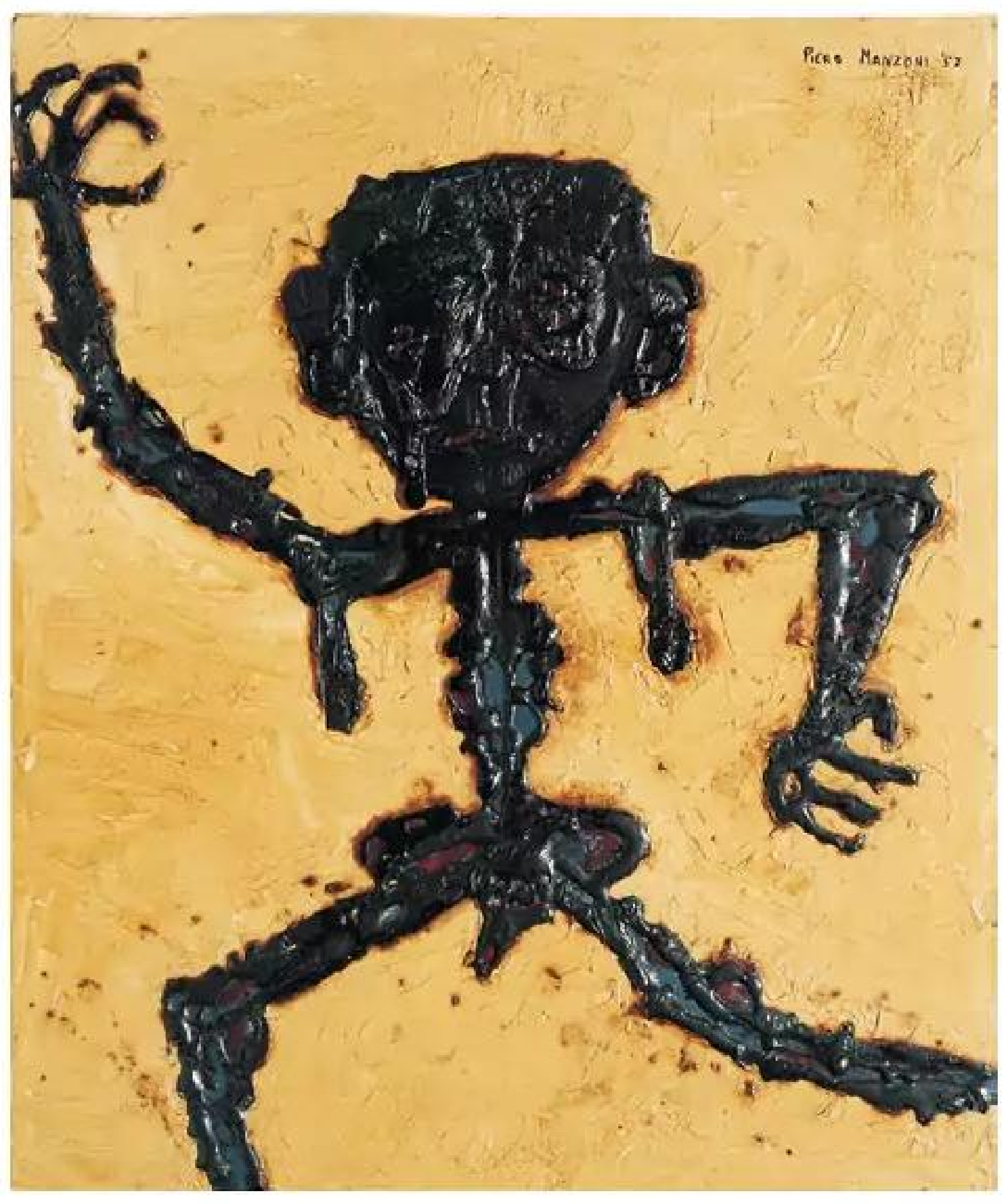
While Manzoni might be best known for canning his own excrement and creating perfectly white canvases, he was also interested in Jungian ideas of the unconscious. He created a series of 'primal images', which include *L'Invincible Jean* (1957), a skeletal figure made of streaky tar worked into a yellow ground. It is joined in this show by other figurative paintings and abstract works.

Valie Export & Ketty La Rocca: Body Sign
16 December–7 February 2026
Thaddaeus Ropac, Milan

Export once said that her work explored the human body 'as signal bearer of meaning and communication'. She made her name in the 1960s and '70s with provocative films and performance art; her work pairs naturally with that of La Rocca, who also used her body as a tool for artistic expression. This show includes photographs, films and installations.

William Turnbull: Paintings 1959–1962
Until 11 April 2026
Axel Vervoordt Gallery, Antwerp

Though best known as one of the artists who invigorated post-war sculpture in Britain, Turnbull cut his teeth painting film posters and, in 1946, enrolled in the painting department of the Slade School of Fine Art. For several years he turned to sculpture, but a trip to New York in 1957 introduced him to Abstract Expressionism and inspired the large Color Field works on display here.



L'Invincible Jean (1957), Piero Manzoni (1933–63), oil and tar on canvas, 60 × 50cm. Hauser & Wirth

Courtesy Fondazione Piero Manzoni/Hauser & Wirth; © Fondazione Piero Manzoni, Milano

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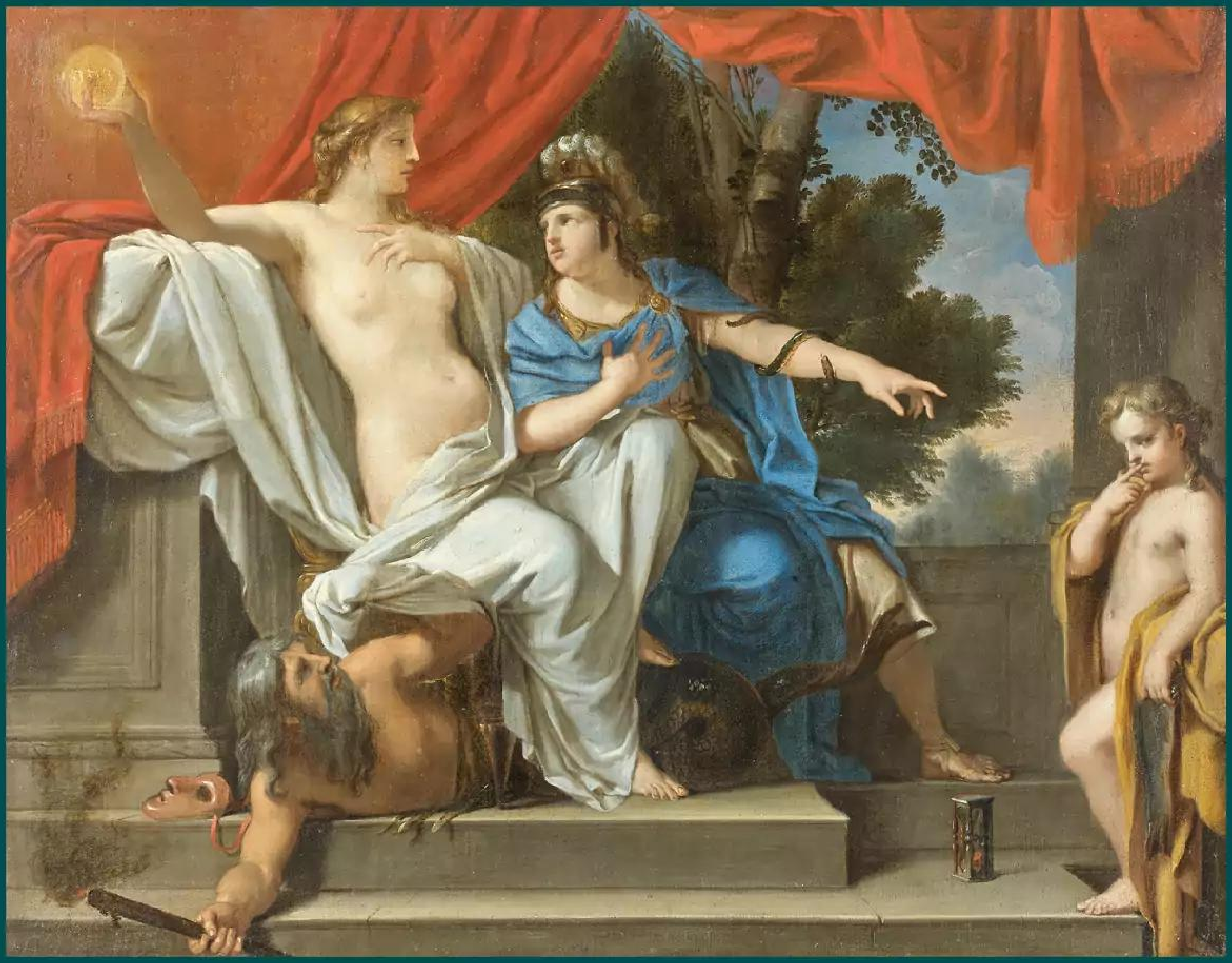

Louis Testelin (1615-1655)
Truth overcomes Falsehood and Discord with the help of Time
Oil on canvas, 68,5 x 87,5 cm
Painting recorded as proposed by the artist for the decoration of the Royal Academy of France's first audience hall, around 1650.

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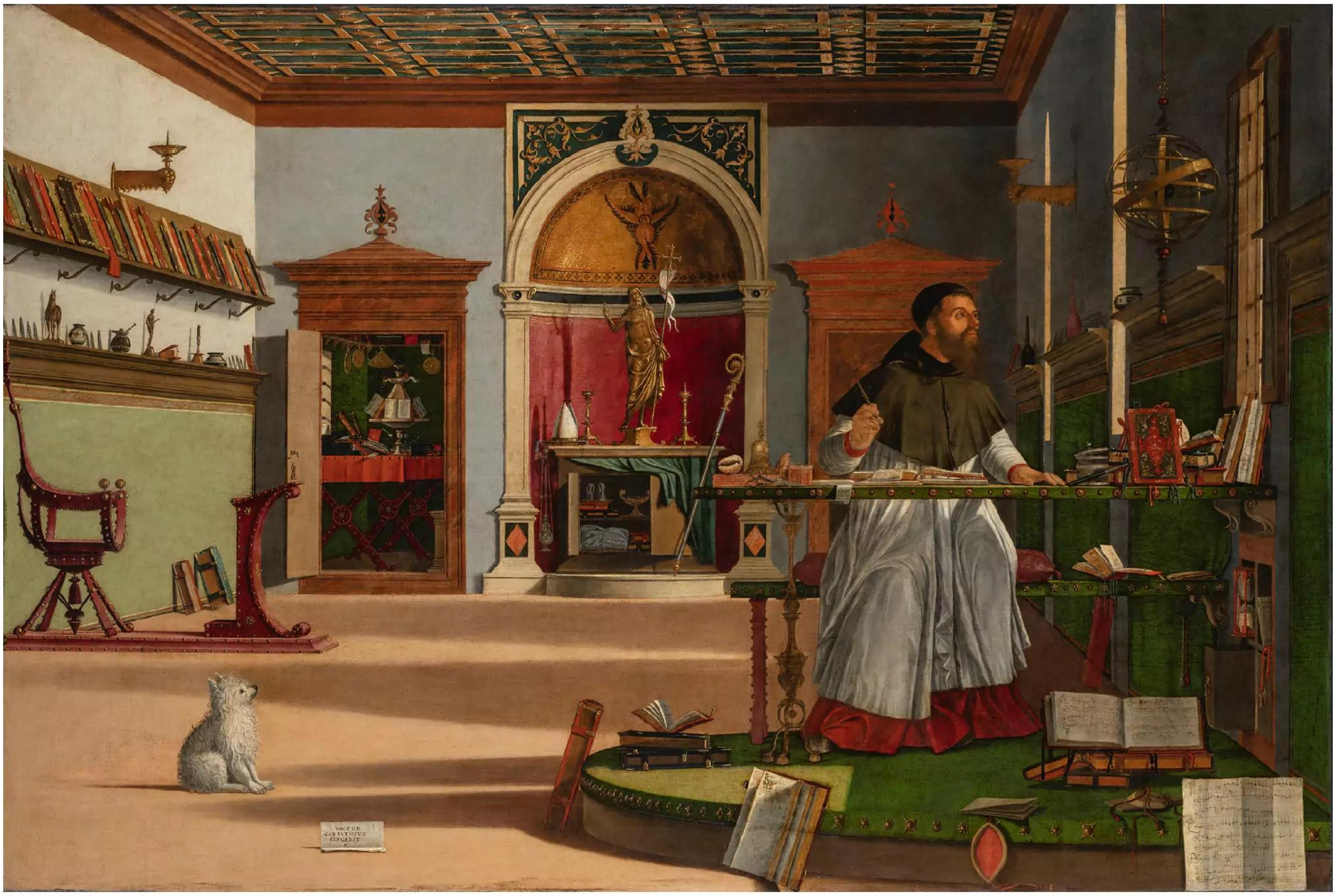
Slices of Carpaccio

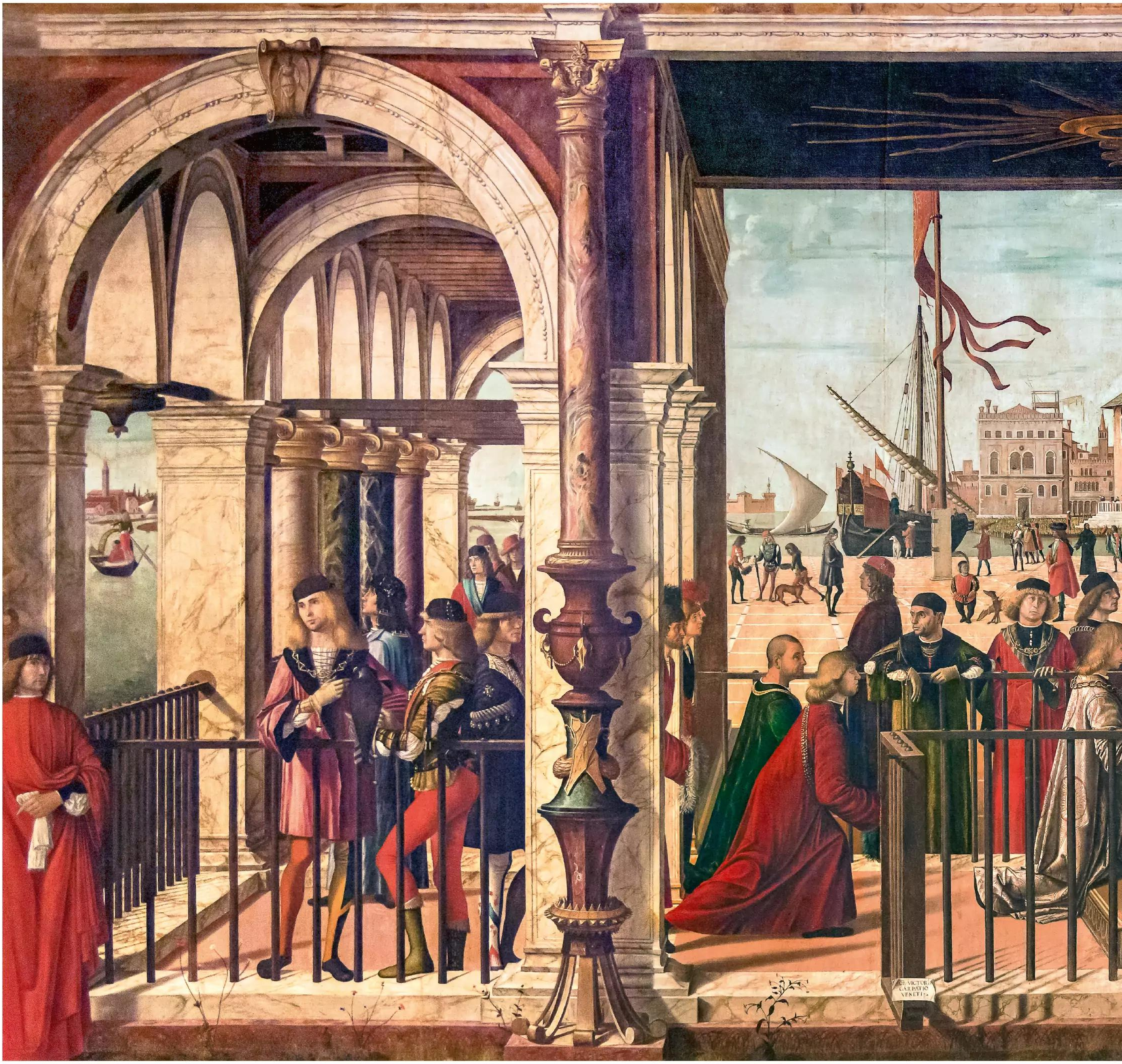


Saint Augustine in his Study, 1502–07, Vittore Carpaccio (c. 1465–1525/26), tempera on canvas, 141 × 210cm. Scuola di San Giorgio degli Schiavoni, Venice

BEN STREET takes a close look at the Venetian artist, 500 years after his death

Directions are no use: you'll just have to discover it somehow. My technique is to keep following the yellow signs and you'll stumble across it through a kind of managed accident. You'll pass a grocery selling novelty pasta, a wedding photographer's studio, a pharmacy with its flashing green cross. And there it suddenly is: a marble-fronted building, small in relation to its neighbours, lodged at the foot of a bridge. And you're in luck: it's open. The reason why this location remains so hard to find is that you never fully see it. Wedged between adjacent apartment blocks, its facade is disrupted by the jutting poles used to moor boats, or the tourist groups heading past it, heading elsewhere. Yet it's appropriate that there's no unblocked vista of the Scuola di San Giorgio degli Schiavoni. Entangled as it is within the fabric of Venice, it's the ideal venue to get close to the poet of the city's urban life, Vittore Carpaccio, who died five centuries ago this year or next, depending on which of two possible dates you favour.

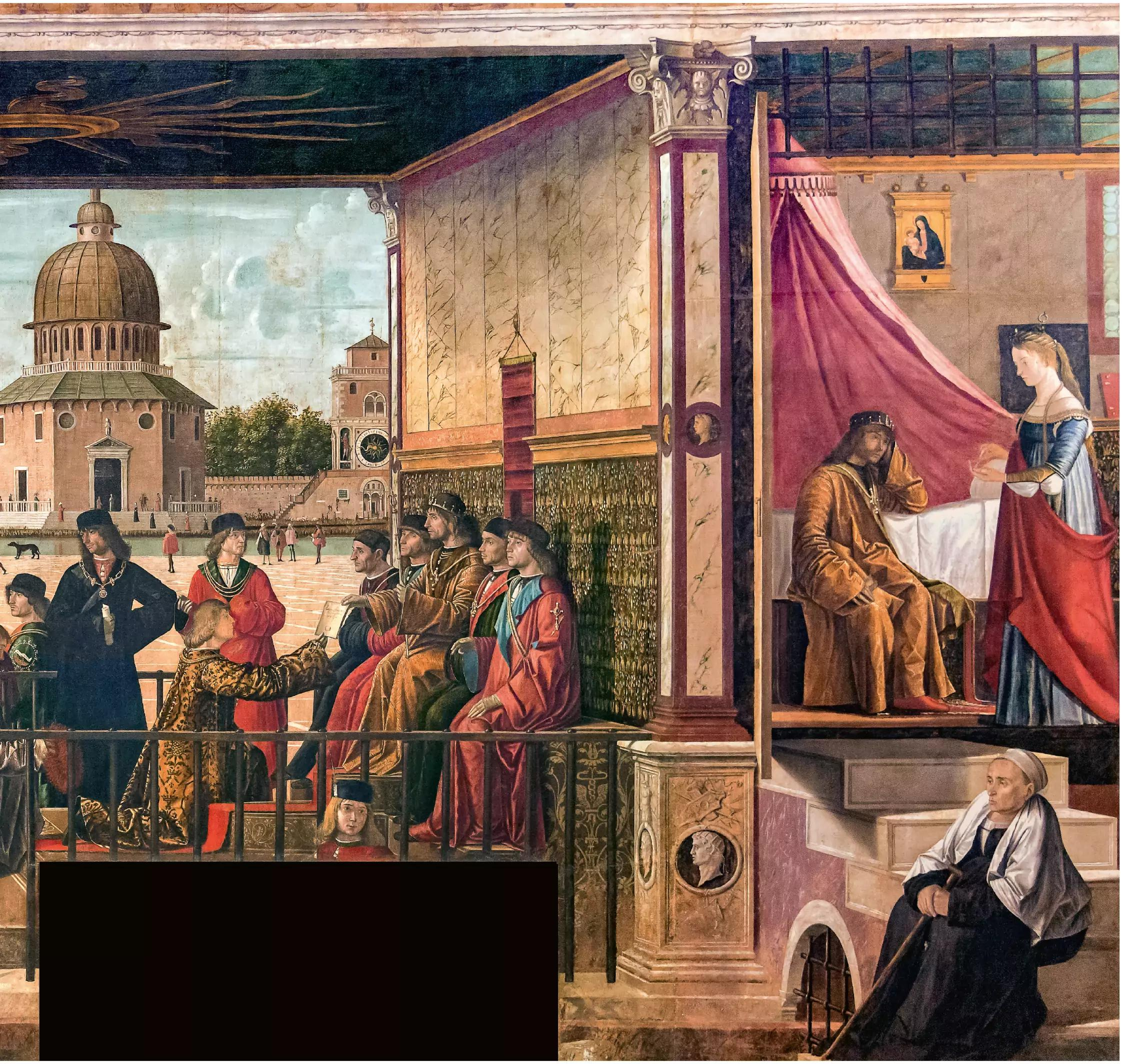
Henry James, who thought Carpaccio 'sailed nearer to perfection' than any of his now more celebrated contemporaries of the Venetian Renaissance, found the Schiavoni 'small and incommodious, the pictures are out of sight and ill-lighted, the custodian is rapacious, the visitors are mutually intolerable, but the shabby little chapel is the palace of art.' The obvious response to this is: what visitors? James was writing at a time in which Carpaccio's star was in the ascendant, the artist having been gradually rediscovered in the second half of the 19th century, first by artists such as Edgar Degas and Edward Burne-Jones, then by John Ruskin, whose 'generous lamp' illuminated his work for Victorian audiences. You can imagine James huffily elbowing the crowds of fellow gawpers out of his line of sight. Yet today the place is usually empty, the orderly worlds of the artist's paintings seeming more distant now than they must have in James's time. Carpaccio's no Caravaggio: there's no colourful biography to pull viewers in and his tidy scenarios can feel naive, or alien, to contemporary audiences. But that's if you're not really looking. Carpaccio, like Bruegel the Elder, is nothing if not generous to the wandering eye.



Arrival of the Ambassadors, 1497–98, Vittore Carpaccio, tempera on canvas, 278 × 589cm. Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice

Like all of Carpaccio's works, the paintings in the Schiavoni have ostensible subjects (Saint George killing the dragon, Saint Jerome bringing a lion home to his monastery, with hilarious consequences) but never seem too beholden to telling the story straight. His images are somehow digressive, long-winded. In his painting of Saint Augustine in his study (*c.* 1502) – which James thought united 'the most masterly finish with a kind of universal largeness of feeling' – the saint hesitates while writing a letter, the sunlight on his face standing for the sudden knowledge of the death of his correspondent, Saint Jerome. With Augustine distracted, we're let loose to rummage through his study, to lose ourselves in his collection of trinkets and sculptures, the astrolabe and armillary sphere and his literary lazy Susan.

The same goes for the artist's great cycle of paintings on the theme of Saint Ursula, now housed in the Accademia Gallery in Venice. Not even Carpaccio seems especially gripped by the Golden Legend narrative he's apparently illustrating. What's more interesting is what happens when you diverge from the main current of the story: duck into an alley between two fantastical buildings, take a



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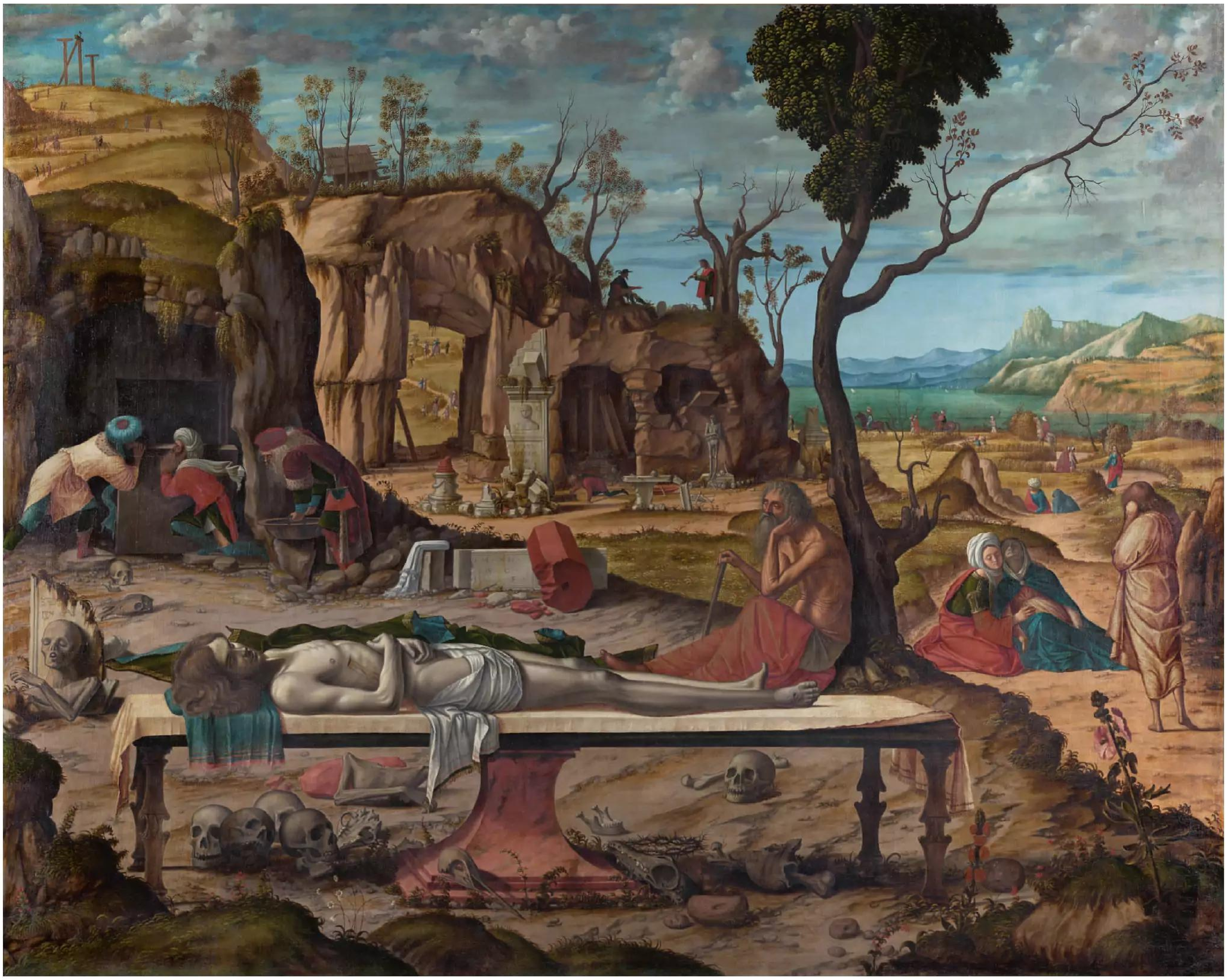
snaking path up a hillside or squeeze through a jostling crowd of onlookers. The trick is to treat his paintings like Venice itself: to rove unhurriedly through his fictive streets and squares, to indulge in the pleasures of getting lost, allowing meanings to emerge by accident. It's a dreamily distracted quality shared by many of Carpaccio's characters. In the canvas titled *Arrival of the Ambassadors*, almost every face is looking listlessly away from the main event, the arrangement of the marriage of princess Ursula, daughter of the king of Brittany, to the pagan prince Etherius. And in the adjacent scene, in which Ursula is enumerating on slender fingers all of the conditions of their marriage, her father the king looks as though he'd rather be anywhere else but there.

Carpaccio's recently restored painting *The Preparation of Christ's Tomb* (1505/20), now on view in a small exhibition at the Gemäldegalerie, Berlin, is the most digressive of all. The scene takes place in a temporal grey zone between the death and burial of Christ. He is laid out on a flat table in the foreground, with the event of the painting's title shunted towards the left and, as is the artist's tendency,



The Preparation of Christ's Tomb, 1505/20, Vittore Carpaccio, tempera on canvas, 145×180.5cm. Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin

it's all extrapolation from there. The hollow forms of the human and animal skulls that litter the barren floor are picked up in the skull-like shape of the hillside in the middle distance, its interior scooped out to accommodate tombs. A pattern of thin, bent arms repeats like a dance move from Christ's body to Job's, transplanted into the scene from the Old Testament, to the mummified corpses dispersed across the landscape. Though close to the work of his contemporaries, such as Andrea Mantegna and Giovanni Bellini, the work's eerie doubling of related shapes and resistance to narrative closure seem to anticipate the work of Giorgio de Chirico, even Dalí. And although the painting can't be securely dated, there's no missing its resonance with a near-contemporary image, Dürer's *Melencolia I* (1514). Both works bring together the head-in-hand motif of melancholy with mysterious geometric forms, in Carpaccio's case a broken column, towards which Job gazes uncomprehendingly. We might respond to the painting itself in a similar way.

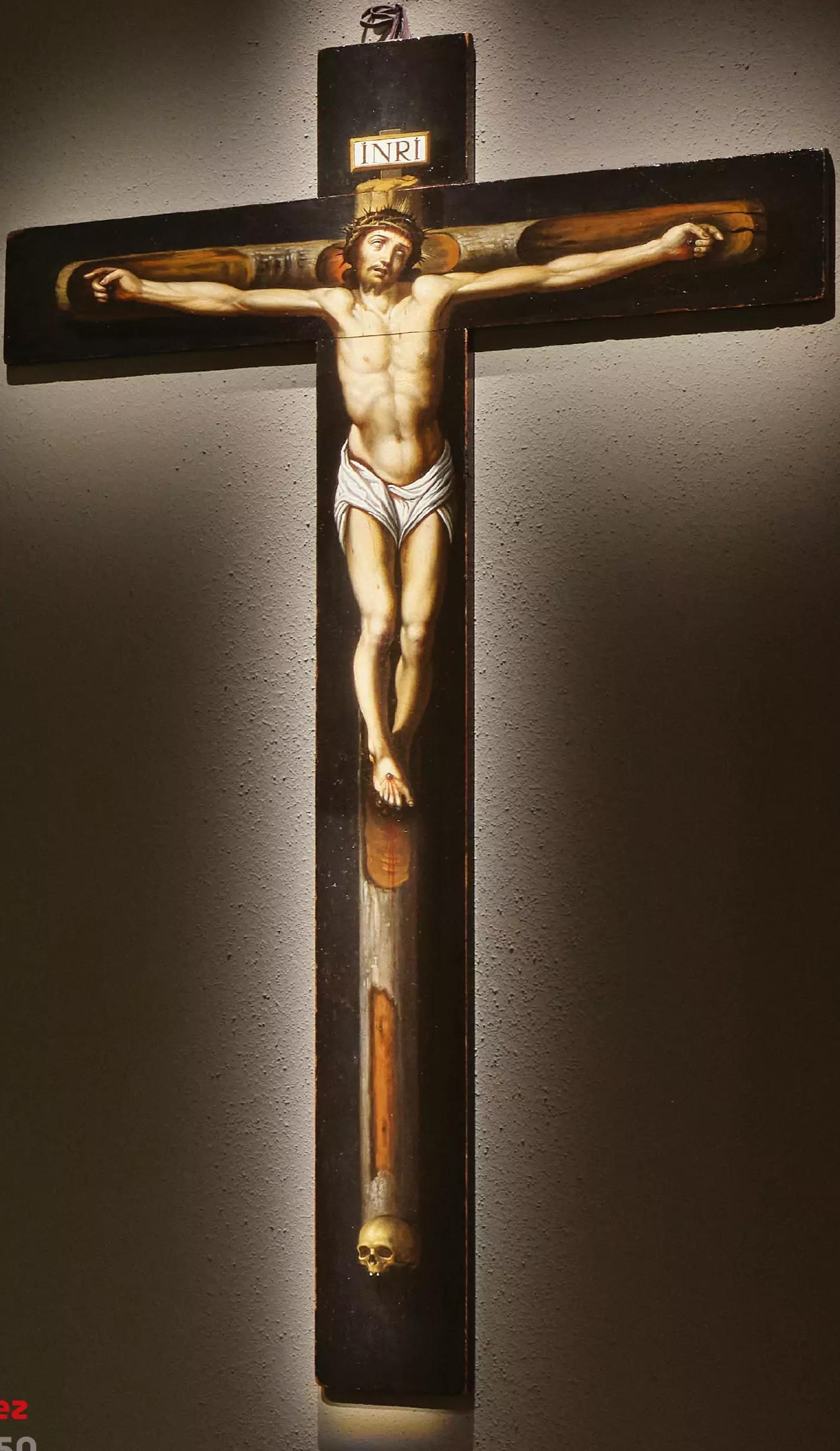
The Preparation joins a suite of Carpaccio works, including two of the Schiavoni paintings and the complete Ursula cycle, that have been restored in recent years. Yet the restoration of this painting has done nothing to resolve its mysteries; it has, if anything, made them more compelling. Removing layers of yellowed varnish and grime has restored to focus the artist's knife-sharp handling of the textures of stone, fabric and vegetation. The pattern of orangey-red areas, which draw the eye from the reddish stone of the base of the table on which Christ is laid all the way to the crimson tabard of the musician in the distance, is warmer and brighter now. This enhanced visibility makes clearer what it was Henry James saw in Carpaccio and what we might too: visions of the ordinary world intensified through attention. The way the world might look through the eyes of someone restored to life.

Ben Street is a writer, educator and art historian based in London.

'Tribute to Vittore Carpaccio' is at the Gemäldegalerie, Berlin, until 6 April 2026.

Photo: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie / Thuja Seidel; Public Domain Mark 1.0

NICHOLAS HALL



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María Josefa Sánchez
Cell Cross, ca. 1640–50
91.8 x 52.4 cm

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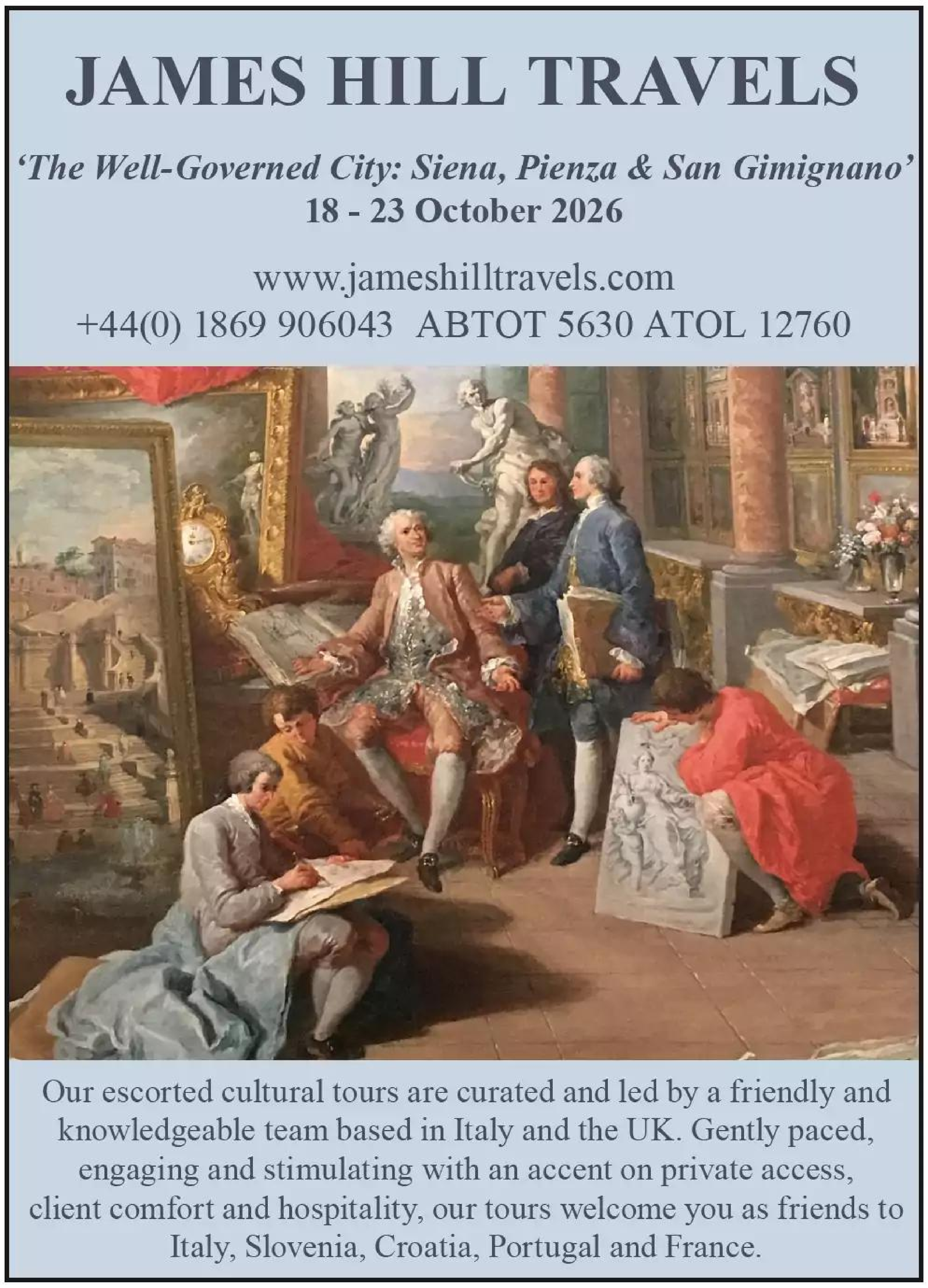
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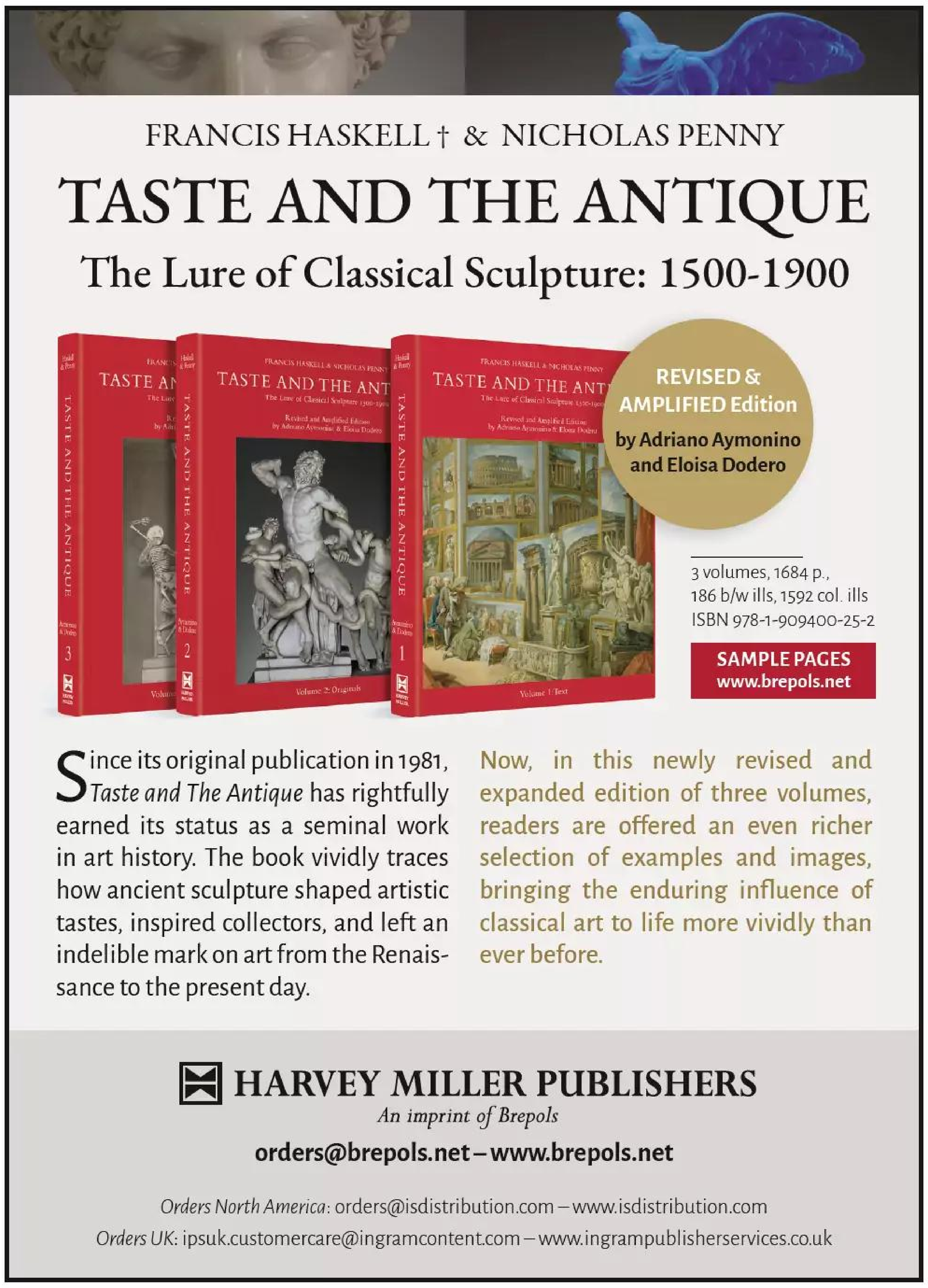
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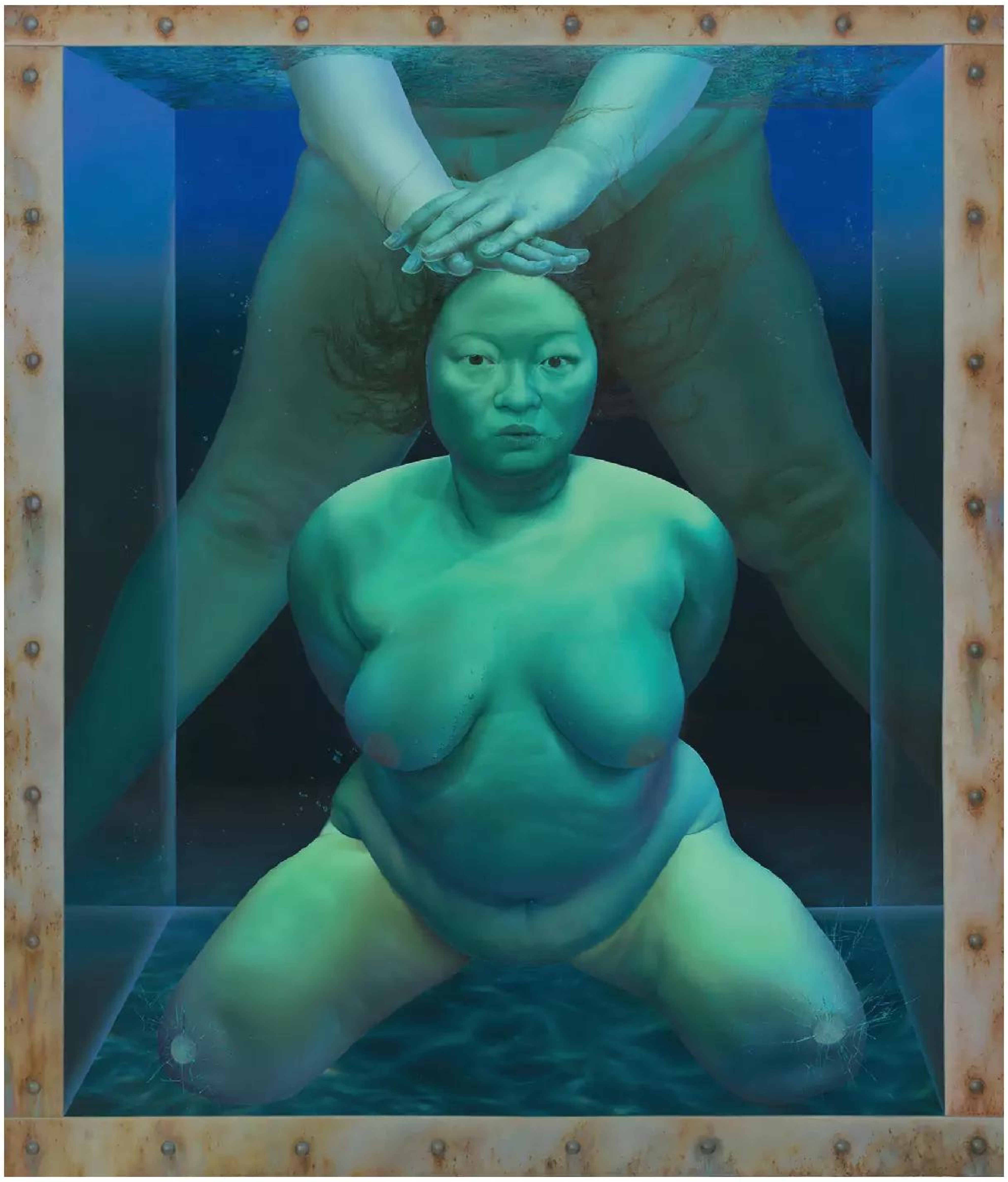
You think you're paranoid?



Pruning, 2025, Sasha Gordon (b. 1998), oil on linen, 213.4 × 183.5cm

The current moment in American art screams unease, writes **HETTIE JUDAH**

The exhibition 'Sixties Surreal' at New York's Whitney Museum explores Surrealism not at its Parisian roots but decades later, as an expressive mode in American art. It is a show of light and dark. Surrealism influenced art of many moods, from the gutter wit of Claes Oldenburg's *Soft Toilet* to Lee Bontecou's ominous, machine-like reliefs.

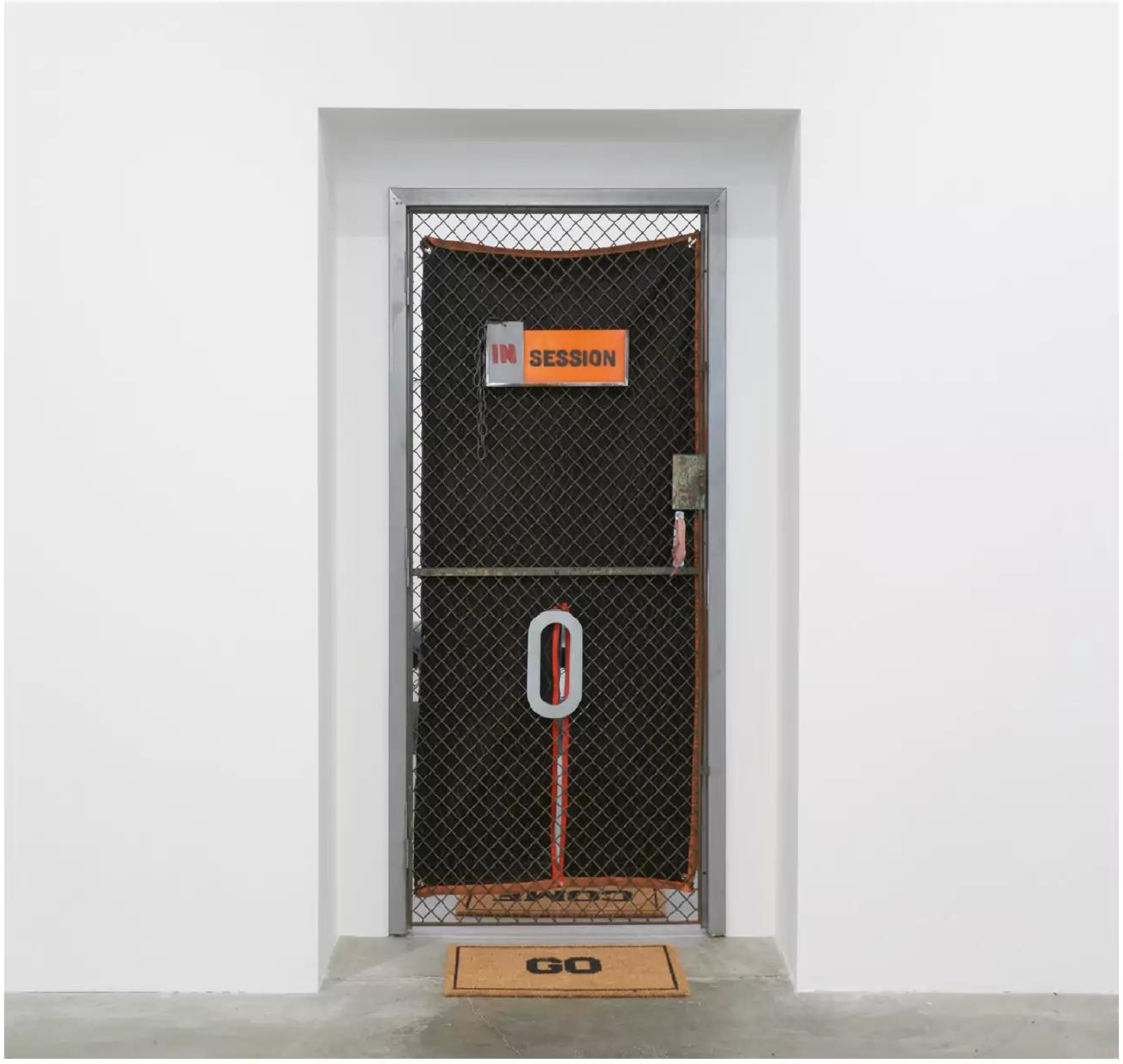
With its conceptual roots in psychoanalysis, Surrealism was a mode impeccably suited to a mid-century American population in thrall to self-examination. The Surrealists' fascination with dreams chimed with the psychedelic revelations of flower children, and their upfront engagement with sexuality with the liberatory tenets of free love. Juxtapositions achieved through collage proved a subversive tool for revolutionary social movements. Among the revolutionaries was the feminist Martha Rosler, whose activist art pasted pornographic images of women's bodies on to adverts for domestic appliances, suggesting both as goods available for ownership. Swerving literal representation, Surrealism also offered a powerful means by which to explore the violence of the era both at home and abroad.

Midway through the period explored in 'Sixties Surreal', the historian Richard Hofstadter identified a tendency he dubbed, in the title of an essay of 1964, 'The Paranoid Style in American Politics'. The paranoid style encompassed qualities of 'heated exaggeration, suspiciousness, and conspiratorial fantasy', and was characterised by 'paranoid modes of expression by more or less normal people' in which 'the feeling of persecution is central [and] systematized in grandiose theories of conspiracy'. Just as the Surrealism of 1920s Paris offers a way to read American art of the 1960s, so Hofstadter's concept of paranoid style offers well-tuned tools with which to approach the politics of our time.

Hofstadter used the term, he wrote, 'much as a historian of art might speak of the baroque or the mannerist style. It is, above all, a way of seeing the world and of expressing oneself.' If Hofstadter can plunder art history, I feel no compunction about appropriating his coinage in return, for I can think of no more appropriate phrase to characterise this moment in American art.

Recently shown at David Zwirner's New York gallery, Sasha Gordon's paintings embody paranoid style at its most apocalyptic. *It Was Still Far Away* (2024) seats the artist's likeness on a picnic blanket in unpopulated parkland. In isolated oblivion, headphones covering her

Courtesy the artist/David Zwirner, New York; © the artist



Entrance, 2025, Nayland Blake (b. 1960), steel, doormats, fabric, leather, acrylic, wood, paint, and hardware, 210 × 94 × 118cm

ears, she remains intent on trimming her toenails even as they are warmed by the hot pink glow of an exploding mushroom cloud erupting in the middle distance.

It Was Still Far Away was followed by a gallery of monumental paintings, each of which embodies acute psychological harm of one sort or another. The borders of *Pruning* (2025) are painted like strips of metal studded with bolts, between which Gordon appears, bound and naked, staring out from a tank of water, while a naked figure bears down on her head, keeping her submerged.

The figures in *Petrified* (2025) are both encrusted with muddy clay, one lying on the grey puddled ground, the other striding forward victoriously with a rope. Winning or losing seems immaterial, for there is nothing in this denuded scene with its swampy ground, ruined barn and chipped picket fence worth fighting for. In *A Visitation* (2025), Gordon again appears doubled, isolated within a cone of light in a dark room. One body slumps back over a chair – dead, dreaming or unconscious – while the other looms furiously, fingers digging deep into the flesh of the other's shoulders.

In part, Gordon's paintings engage with the question of how (or perhaps why) to make art at a time of war and political tumult. It is a question that famously bedevilled Philip Guston, and one revisited by Nicole Eisenman in her 2024 painting *Fiddle V. Burns* (first shown at Sadie Coles HQ in London last year, now displayed at 52 Walker in New York). *Fiddle V. Burns* pictures the artist in a pit in the ground, straining, brush in hand, to catch a glimpse of the world beyond while the caterpillar tracks of a military tank roll above their head. Is painting in a time of crisis merely fiddling while Rome burns (or performing a pedicure while the world explodes), or is it the artist's duty?

Gordon's paintings also engage with the broader field of paranoia – intrusive thoughts, catastrophising, panic, errant yearnings. These are aspects of paranoid style that she holds in common with other artists showing in New York, among them Nayland Blake. This autumn Blake took over both of Matthew Marks's Chelsea galleries. One building was home to a survey of sculptures and videos made in the 1990s during what we are now unfortunately obliged to recognise as the Culture Wars: Round One. The front end of the other building carried an exhibition Blake curated of small works with hand-made appeal. A surprise lurked behind a barricaded door: the gallery's back room outfitted as a combined therapy suite and sex dungeon, entitled *Session*.

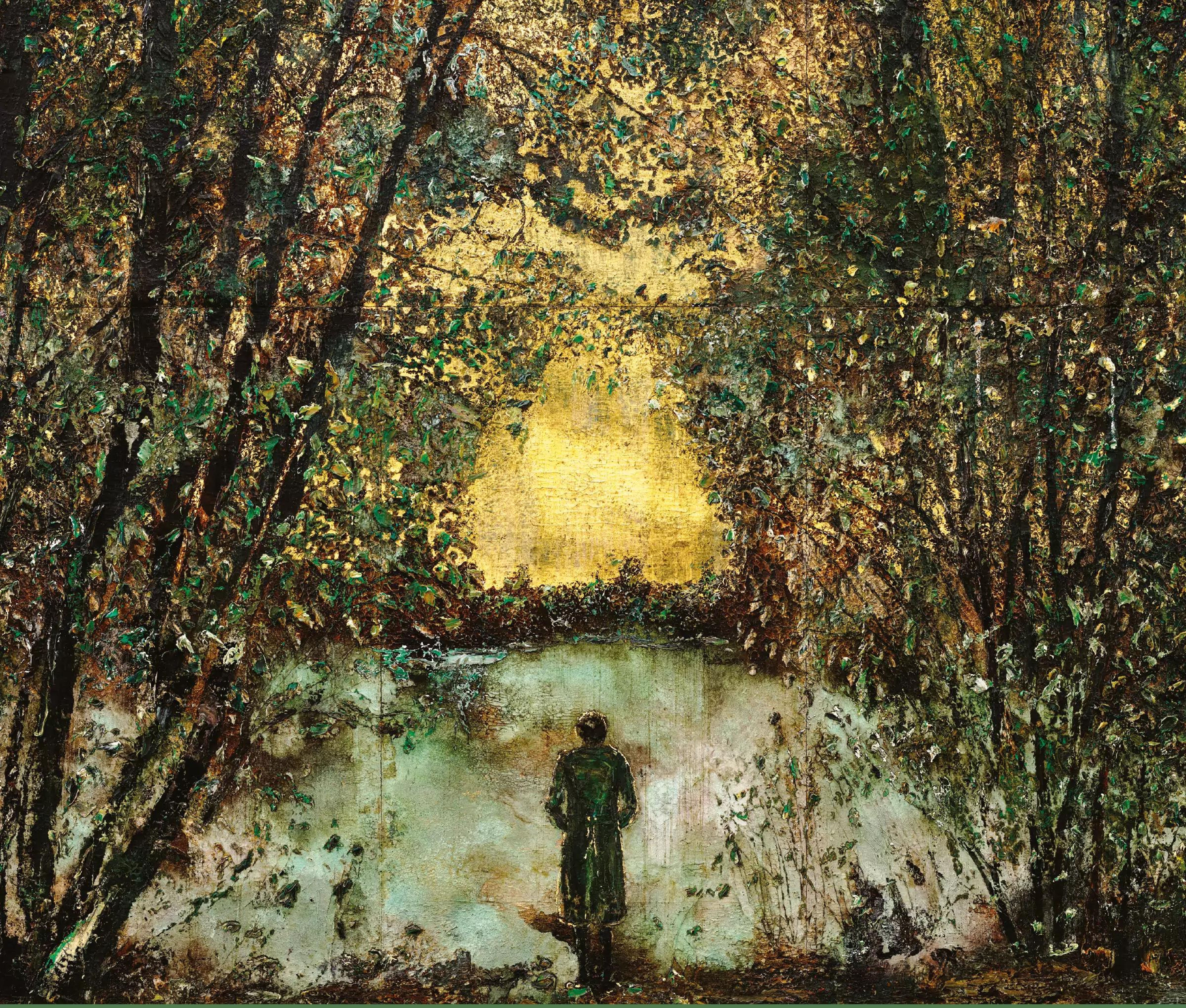
At the end of its wipe-clean couch were strung tin cans, each labelled with a potential betrayal – of family, of class, of community. The walls carried a battery of instruments, ranging from sexual apparatus to a small tinsel Christmas tree. Here was a room in which to feel the weight of guilt, the quality of paranoia, and to seek its expurgation. Blake noted the two professions that refer to appointments as a 'session': the psychoanalyst and the professional dominant. Not mentioned on this list, but implicated, is that exquisitely sensitive paranoiac, the artist.

Hettie Judah is the curator of 'Acts of Creation: On Art and Motherhood', which is at VISUAL, Carlow, until 11 January 2026.

'Sixties Surreal' is at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, until 19 January 2026.

'Nicole Eisenman: STY' is at 52 Walker, New York, until 10 January 2026.

© Nayland Blake



Anselm Kiefer
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October 18, 2025–January 25, 2026

Anselm Kiefer: Becoming the Sea is presented with generous support from the William T. Kemper Foundation, Jeanne and Rex Sinquefield, and Gagosian.

Anselm Kiefer, German, born 1945; *Anselm fuit hic* (Anselm Was Here)(detail), 2024; emulsion, oil, acrylic, shellac, gold leaf, and sediment of electrolysis on canvas; 30 feet 10 1/16 inches x 27 feet 6 11/16 inches; © Anselm Kiefer, Collection of the artist and courtesy Gagosian 2025.309
Photo: Nina Slavcheva

SAINT LOUIS ART MUSEUM

Naomi Campbell, Mick Jagger and Edward Enninful at the British Museum's 'Pink Ball' fundraising gala in October

As the prospect of restored state support becomes ever more distant, Britain's museums are turning to US-style fundraising techniques. Can this benefit more than just a handful of large, London-based institutions?

Capital idea

BY CONRAD LANDIN

London's big museums have had a good autumn. The British Museum's inaugural Met Gala-style ball not only raised £2.5 million, but announced a £10.3 million pledge from the Garfield Weston Foundation for new 'welcome pavilions' in Bloomsbury. The Science Museum secured £10 million from Indian vaccine giant the Serum Institute – its biggest ever international donation – to revamp its Making the Modern World gallery. And to top it all, the National Gallery announced that a new wing would be largely funded by two gifts of £150 million each – far outstripping the previous record for the biggest cash donation to a museum. With Labour having lived up to its no-promises manifesto and left the Conservatives' austerity largely intact, these big gifts are a shot in the arm. Could 2025 really be the year that US-style philanthropy finally reached the shores of little Blighty?

The differences with the United States are still stark. These big donations are all tightly restricted to capital projects – whereas key US institutions have far greater access to unrestricted funds. The Met, for instance, used $259.7 million of donated income to fund museum operations in 2024–25. This included $93.9 million of assets released from donor restrictions. The scale of US cultural endowments allows vast investment, reassuring accountants that operational spending can be sustained. One of the few options UK museums have for raising unrestricted funds is through visitor membership schemes: last year, the Tate's scheme – the largest such one – brought in £15.6 million, while the V&A's equivalent earned £10.5 million.

Like their US counterparts, the names of Britain's most generous art patrons are explicitly embossed on the institutions they support: Len Blavatnik at Tate Modern, the Gettys at the National Gallery and the Sainsburys at both the National Gallery and the British Museum. The new wings they financed all increased visitor footfall and allowed greater space for chargeable exhibitions in the age of free museum entry. But they also come with increased running costs that would be unlikely to be met by the Treasury cheque book at any time – let alone in the current fiscal climate. Add that burden to ballooning energy costs, staff demands for inflation-level pay rises and unexpected repair bills, and museums are facing a perfect storm that the current philanthropy boom might struggle to address.

The biggest donation to a British institution in the most recent financial year did not come in cash. The Sir Percival David Foundation's bequest of 1,700 Chinese ceramics to the British Museum was valued at £915 million – but it had already been loaned to the museum since 2009. Though its sheer scale dwarfs everything and anything, it is this manner of gift that most museums in Britain would recognise. At the National Galleries of Scotland, 60 per cent of donations last year came in the form of artwork. Director-general Anne Lyden believes the prospect of private income paying a substantial share of running costs is 'very unlikely' in the foreseeable future. 'For a lot of donors there's still a sense that the running costs are very much the responsibility of the government or the local authority,' she says. She cites the People's Postcode Lottery as an exception, 'something that I think the sector very much appreciates and sees as something that is vital, but it is in the minority'.

Before joining the NGS in 2013 and taking the top job last year, Lyden spent 18 years at the Getty in Los Angeles. This gave her 'an understanding and awareness of the culture of donations and the gift scheme there' that allows donors to minimise their tax liabilities. She believes many philanthropists are not aware of Britain's cultural gifts scheme, which allows taxpayers to donate works of art and heritage objects and receive a share of the value in lessened tax.

Her time in the United States has also helped her liaise with the NGS's long-established American patrons scheme, which the organisation shares with the National Library of Scotland. Such US patronage programmes have been a fixture since the 1980s. The National Gallery in London's version kicked off with J. Paul Getty II's £50 million donation in 1985. US benefactors later provided almost two thirds of the £134 million cost of converting Bankside Power Station into Tate Modern in the late 1990s.

Donors might be 'interested in specific projects' and the 'transformative impact they will have', V&A director Tristram Hunt says, but museums can work with that. 'How much we get from the government relative to our overall budget is just progressively falling. So we have to be more entrepreneurial,' he says. Hunt speaks of private donor funding for educational programmes like DesignLab Nation – focused on design and technology students in cities outside of London. V&A Dundee, which is a separate charity, was primarily funded by the Scottish Government last year but it attracted support from a number of trusts. Exhibitions were sponsored by Arnold Clark, Dalmore whisky and media giants D.C. Thomson. For V&A East Storehouse in Stratford, 'naming gifts' were secured from Frédéric Jousset and David and Molly Lowell Borthwick.

But is it a struggle to persuade donors to support work that doesn't get their names on the wall? 'It varies with what people want,' says Hunt, explaining that some of the museum's biggest supporters prefer to remain anonymous anyway. 'I can think of a very generous donor who's worked with the V&A for almost a decade, funding the professional development and training of curators and conservators. He feels they should have those opportunities, you know, for research, for travel, for conferences, for work. And that's a really directed, sophisticated, helpful contribution to the budget of the organisation.'

That is what's now called 'impact philanthropy', which is being championed at Westminster thanks to the intervention of the Beacon Collaborative, a group of philanthropists and charities developing a national giving strategy. High-net-worth individuals and trusts increasingly 'wish to manage more of their wealth in ways that align with the social or environmental impact they want to see', the Beacon Collaborative says.

Photo: © German Larkin

Hunt is concerned, however, that new inheritance tax rules for 'non doms' are 'frightening global capital away from London' – which will 'hurt cultural giving'. The reported floods of 'Donald Dasher' US billionaires moving to London, though, are less likely to be deterred by the stricter tax rules introduced by Chancellor Rachel Reeves last year. That's because Americans pay tax on their worldwide income, and can wriggle out of British inheritance tax thanks to a bilateral treaty.

The costs of individual exhibitions have long been supported by corporate sponsors, but recent accusations of 'art washing' have made both museums and corporations more hesitant. Lyden notes too that 'values-led' corporations 'are looking to give those funds directly to local groups' rather than to national institutions. She seems regretful about the 'pushback' against corporate partnerships. 'I think there's an expectation that there's a better, cleaner source of funding available, and the data just doesn't hold up to that,' she says. 'There isn't an abundance of choices for organisations […] Many of them are really in a position of precarity.'

Visitors outside Tate Modern's Blavatnik Building, opened in 2016 and named after its lead donor

BLAVATNIK BUILDING

Museums are instead looking to the same philanthropic trusts that support capital projects. Tate's fundraising income rose to £41.7 million last year, and that included support from the Julia Rausing Trust and the Christian Levett Collection for the women artists exhibition 'Now You See Us', while the Yoko Ono show was backed by London-based US investment banker John J. Studzinski.

Much as the national museums complain of government belt-tightening, some would say they have it easy. While grant-in-aid funding for arts and culture organisations fell by 18 per cent from 2010 to 2023, local government support fell by 48 per cent in England, and 40 per cent in Wales. Spending in the UK is increasingly sucked up by statutory services like schools and social care, leaving 'discretionary' regional museums picking up the crumbs.

Culture Secretary Lisa Nandy hopes that 'place-based philanthropy' – local donors supporting local institutions – will help plug the gap. The Beacon Collaborative says there's a lot of work to be done here, like offering professional support to civil society organisations and pushing local leaders and civic mayors to take the initiative. Carphone Warehouse co-founder David Ross has supported museums in Lincoln, while Hunt cites 'proper, proper gifts' from the wealthy Bamford and Stafford families, as well as the Coates family, who founded bet365, when he worked with the V&A to save the Wedgwood Collection as MP for Stoke-on-Trent Central. But it is still the exception rather than the rule. Recent local museum refurbishments have instead been funded directly from Westminster – such as Perth Museum, which benefited from the Tay Cities Region deal. That effectively leaves councils competing against each other.

'I think we all feel the real pressure our colleagues in regional museums are under,' says Hunt. And I think it is harder to raise philanthropic funds outside of London. That's why when we are offered works of art or gifts, we do always say, this might work better at the local regional museum.'

Lyden believes there is a 'very real risk of regional inequalities' as 'especially international donors are more likely to go to London'. That's the nature of 'more corporate headquarters' and high net worth individuals in the capital. But Lyden says that institutions elsewhere can shout louder about the impact that funding them will have. She points to the inclusion of a print of Norah Neilson Gray's *Mother and Child* (1920s) in the Scottish Government's Baby Box, issued to every family north of the border on the birth of a child. 'For potential funders and donors, that's what it's all about. It's about being a good ancestor. It's about how the decisions that are made today will benefit future generations.'

The National Gallery believes success in London will lift the prospects of the cultural sector elsewhere – and encourage greater support from government and private donors alike. The alternative, of course, is that government sees a sector increasingly able to fend for itself, and a public good that already plays second fiddle to schools and hospitals suffers more. And a sector more dependent on private investment becomes more dependent on the whims of investors – including regionally.

One way to ensure private donations do not deter government spending is match funding – which the Beacon Collaborative wants to be regionally targeted. Its report cites the success of Arts Council England match funding between 2012 and 2017, when 17 organisations including the Glasshouse in Gateshead and Margate's Turner Contemporary were incentivised to generate funds in 25-year endowments of over £52 million. They now have annual returns from 2.5 to 6 per cent, bringing in regular income that can support running costs.

Donors will always expect, says Hunt, that 'running costs – security and lighting and heating and all that kind of stuff – are part of the taxpayer contribution'. But if they continue to rise, how long can that be sustained? Eventually museums will be forced to either take a more confrontational line with government, or be straight with their donors that they want money without strings.

Much as the zeros have totted up on the cheques, the London experience of philanthropy remains rather piecemeal – and quintessentially British.

Conrad Landin is a journalist based in Glasgow and co-editor of New Internationalist.

Photo: Mike Kemp/In Pictures via Getty Images

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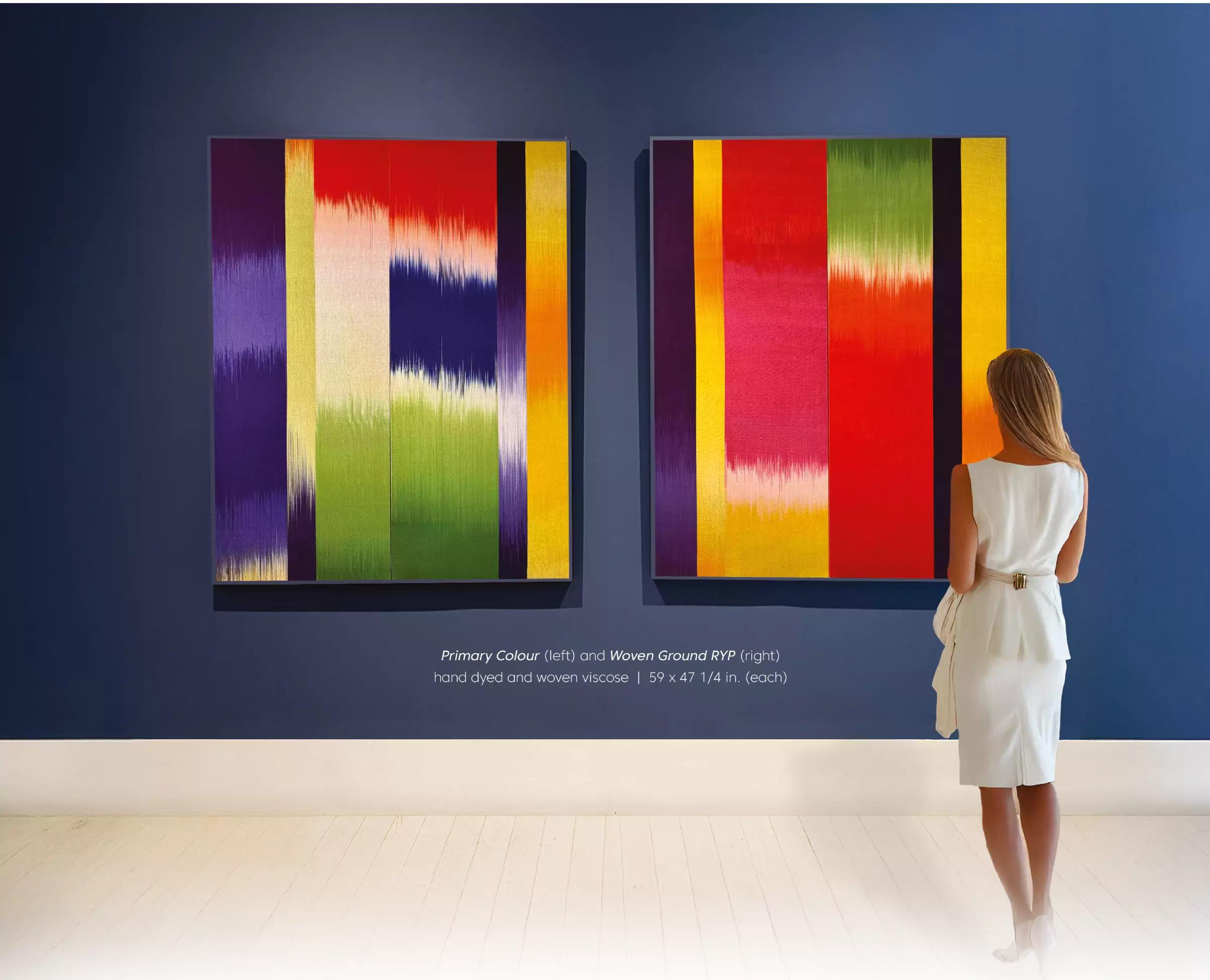

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'A building doesn't have to be gracious, or even functional, to be special'

WILL WILES has a soft spot for James Stirling's History Faculty Building in Cambridge

In 1940, the architectural historian John Summerson wrote a wonderful essay about his 'luminous and liberating' time as one of 11 pupils attending a tiny boarding school at Riber Castle, a stately home in Derbyshire. Riber was a 'castellar hulk', a 'big and comfortless' Victorian Gothic pastiche built by an industrialist and 'decorated with the naive barbarity of a methodist turned Caliph'. It filled the boys' minds with 'delicious horrors and shocking impossibilities'. Summerson loved it, and it was there his passion for architecture first stirred. He called his essay 'The Unromantic Castle'.

The lesson is that a building doesn't have to be gracious, or even functional, to be special. James Stirling's History Faculty Building at the University of Cambridge could not be more different to Riber in style, but it too is an unromantic castle. Completed in 1968, it has been plagued by functional problems ever since, all of which I enjoyed first hand as a student in the 1990s. This had made it, for some, an emblem of the failings of modern architecture in general, and in 1985 it had escaped demolition by one vote in the University Senate. But now £60 million has been pledged towards a major refit. At last, the History Faculty might be able to put its troubled past behind it.

The History Faculty is one of the famed 'Red Trilogy' of university buildings that Stirling produced in the 1960s (in brilliant, fissile partnership with James Gowan until 1963), along with the Engineering Department at the University of Leicester and the Florey accommodation building for Queen's College in Oxford. That trio is an architectural genre of its own, unlike almost anything else before or since, individually very different, but with strong family resemblance: orange-red brick or tile, copious glazing, structural daring and unmistakeable profiles.

Of the trilogy, the Cambridge building is the hardest to love, lacking the elan of the Leicester engineering department and the compact charm of the Florey. It is a six-storey L-shaped tower containing offices and lecture rooms, said to resemble an open book. In the middle of this L spills a ziggurat of faceted glass, which covers the reading room of the Seeley Library. A neat red-tiled lift tower, a trademark of the trilogy, serves as turret; a glacis and the sunken area that shields the book stacks serve as perimeter defence. All the upward thrust of the tower and the pyramid of glass cannot overcome the weight of the ground-level buildings; where Leicester soars, Cambridge squats; where the Florey encloses, the history faculty sprawls.

Inside, for all its seasonal discomforts, the Seeley library was an extraordinary place to work. The corridors of the upper floors of the buildings looked down on to the reading room, and Stirling and Gowan gave them protruding 'bays' to encourage the building's users to stop and look. From the library below, these balconies still have considerable futuristic dash, combined with a touch of the medieval oriel window. Lines of sight were central to the design. The faculty's main entrance hall looked onto the library, making at least one part of the building instantly legible. During the 1985 debate – according to a contemporary account by Deyan Sudjic – Stirling heard a professor likening this layout to 'an Edwardian hotel': from the front desk in the lobby 'Either you go up to your room, or you pass beyond, into the tea lounge, with the light coming from above, and no doubt a palm court orchestra playing.'

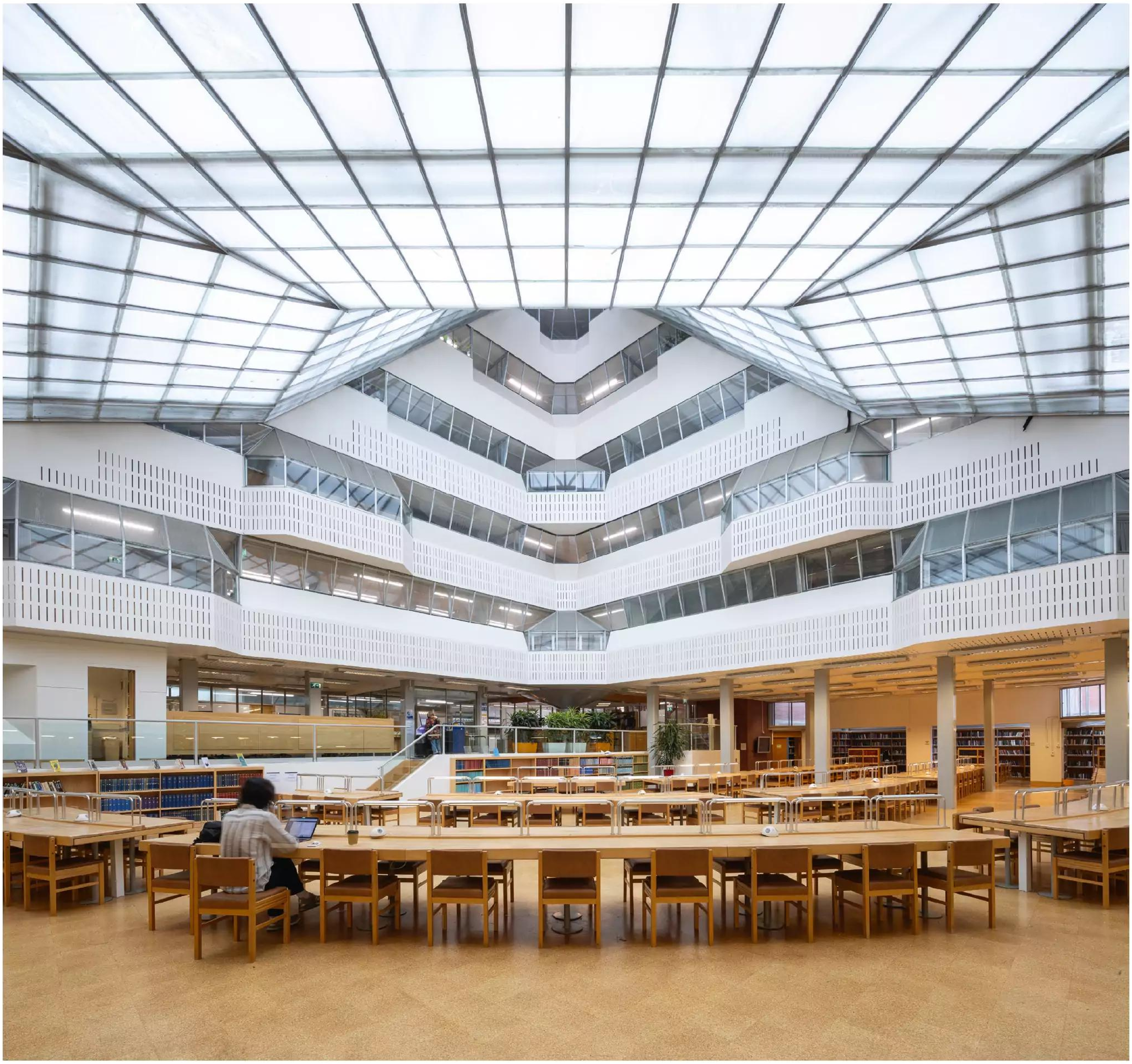
The quarter-circle of library itself – the 'tea lounge' – was designed as a panopticon, with the librarians' desk by the central pillar, where there are uninterrupted views across the reading room, into both levels of book stacks at the outer radius of the open space. As you would expect, natural light was never an issue in this palm court, but my abiding memory of it is in the early nights of winter, when the steel-and-glass vaults disappeared in the gloom, and you were left in the pool of light of your desk, in a vast gothic space. Even the building's curiosities of plan, its half-floors and nonsequiturs, gave it a sense of mystery, making it a place of hidden areas and secret passages. There was no denying the building's problems, but that was quite salutary. It didn't ladle on the charm. Its pleasures were more rugged and, well, unromantic.

Hopefully future historians will find it a little easier. The building's original sin was that it was rotated 90 degrees to fit into a slightly smaller site than had originally been allocated. This avoided a more disruptive redesign, but moved the main entrance away from the pedestrian spine of the Sidgwick Site, Cambridge University's post-war humanities campus at the edge of the city centre, masterplanned by Casson Conder Partnership. More damagingly, the library glasshouse was turned towards the south, and the sun.

'We went up to the top floor on our first site visit and the temperature up there was 50 degrees,' says Jessica Mailey, architect director at BDP, the practice in charge of the refit. 'You would put your hand on the steelwork and go "ow".' Mailey adds that there were 19 buckets across the library, coping with the various leaks. Many of these problems, BDP has learned, were not caused by the design as such, but by the crudities of construction. The steel frame supporting the extraordinary glass roof of the library 'was kind of hammered into place', and its joints were not sealed properly. This steel will be removed in sections and reinstalled, with improved glazing and ventilation. Meanwhile circulation and access problems are being fixed with understated ground-level pavilions.

But the glory of that central cathedral of reading will be retained. The main desk is being moved, making the heart of the building less focused on centralised surveillance, and opening up new sight lines. No one should have to shiver or sweat through their studies, but one hopes that not all the building's quirks and mysteries will be eradicated. Summerson found the 'raw, uncouth' qualities of Riber Castle more exciting and unforgettable than the sedate Georgian buildings of his other school. When he wrote his essay about it, Riber was a ruin; its shell has since been filled with apartments. Fortunately the difficult middle child of the Red Trilogy survives and may yet thrive.

Will Wiles is an author, most recently of the short story collection The Anechoic Chamber *(Salt Publishing).*



The reading room of the Seeley Library, History Faculty Building, Cambridge, designed by James Stirling with James Gowan and completed in 1968

Photo courtesy BDP

Peace and plenty

This Christmas, spare a thought for the painters who found serenity in abundance, writes **MOLLY PEPPER STEEMSON**

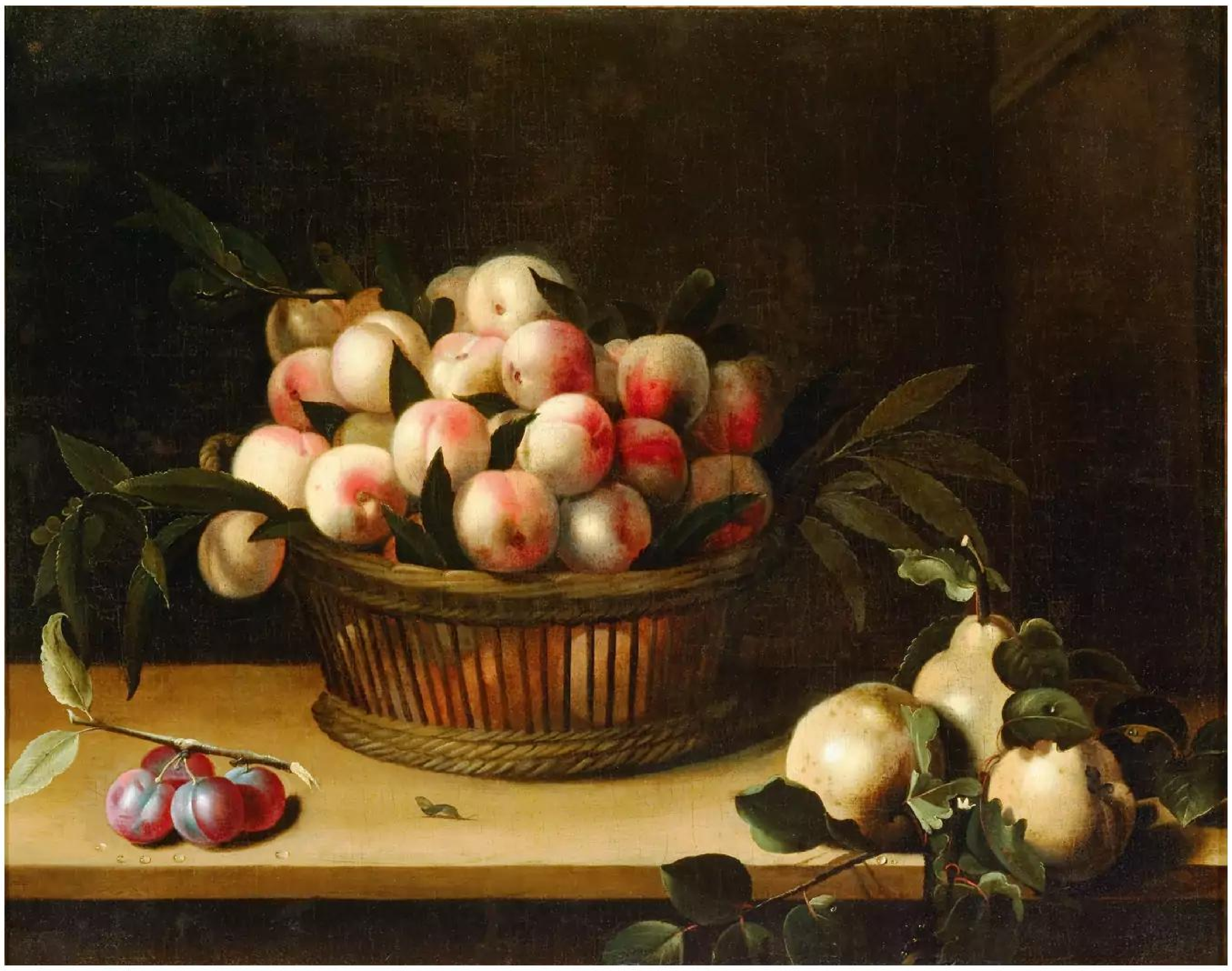
Abundance is the contemporary spectacle. We know this. Most of us can have as much of anything as we want, all of the time. Supermarket shelves overflow with apricots, with berries, regardless of the season. In fact, outside of our bodies' temperatures, there is no season. Well, there are some seasons. There is 'wedding season' and there is 'party season'. The latter is similar to – though not the same as – what we used to call 'winter'.

'Party season' is memorialised by photographs that are committed to the Instagram grids of 'micro-influencers' ('creators' with a following of between 1,000 and 100,000) and on the pages of magazines. In the art world, and those adjacent to it, there is a distinct look to these photographs. Grapes overflow from cake-stands on to salvaged oak boards resplendent with figs and cheese. Creams are piped, dolloped, swirled. Tablecloths are often white. Fruits tumble, which is a word Jeremy Lee, proprietor of the restaurant Quo Vadis in London's Soho, uses fondly, so everyone else does, too. Champagne coupes are arranged into towers; langoustines are arranged into towers; cakes are stacked into towers, as is traditional.

It does not matter how the food exits the building, be it in gut, or handbag, or drain, or bin. All that matters is the image.

As Christmas approaches, the production and reproduction of these images increases in its relentlessness. And on other parts of the internet, it is much the same. Twelve months after their last visit, the mums of Mumsnet swarm The Official Christmas Fridge Thread. The images are equally curated – though they cater to a different set of tastes. There is no peace from the relentless bombardment, from the gammon that slaps you in the eye as it tumbles out of the fridge, from the towers, from the heavy silver trays of pink-piped canapés. But abundance is also the language of Christmas, and to choose not to participate would be to turn oneself into a Dickensian villain whose curious moral fibre needs desperately to be spun into shape.

It can seem fruitless, then, to search for serenity within abundance. It was uncommon in the 17th-century still lifes whose idioms are abused by the artist-creators, and chef-creators, of today. That being said, it is not impossible to obtain.



Basket of Peaches with Quinces and Plums, after 1641, Louise Moillon (c. 1610–1696), oil on canvas, 66 × 84.5cm. Los Angeles County Museum of Art

Louise Moillon's most striking paintings are those in which she represents very few different things. The dish of plums (1632), the basket of damsons (1629) or the bowl of peaches on a wooden box (1634) are each generous, sensual, and inviting representations of bounty, but they're quiet ones, too. The abundance the paintings describe is natural – of one season, one place.

There is a restful solemnity in the esteem with which Moillon regards the everyday. Even when there is more than one type of fruit, when the grapes and their vines are knotted between each fat round peach, the image remains serene. The background is dark, the table is plain. The beauty of the work exists between bounty and restraint.

Perhaps the most famous contemporary iteration of a thoughtful abundance is Felix Gonzalez-Torres' untitled series of 'candy works' from the early 1990s, in which an exhibitor displays an 'ideal weight' of coloured and wrapped sweets for the viewer to take and consume. Like Moillon, Gonzalez-Torres deals in domestic scenes: one of the candy works is a 'portrait of Ross', his partner. The candy is consumed, the pile diminishes, just as Ross Laycock's body diminished as he died from AIDS.

It matters, here, how the candies leave the room. It matters that the symbolic body is eaten. The museum staff who replenish the pile of candy each week are not the same as the boys and girls with their trays of canapés, forever emerging through heavy swing doors. They do not serve the spectacle, but the art itself. The beauty of the work exists between the weight and its erosion. There is no erosion without consumption.

Overabundance is disturbing and unnatural. Even more so in winter, which is a season that provides what is preserved, cooked, stored, hardy. We should let it. The experience of Christmas should not be spectacle itself – aggravating, infuriating, unmanageable – and it doesn't have to be. We can have enough of things, and plenty of what we're meant to. Perhaps this will be the Christmas we find peace.

Molly Pepper Steemson is a writer and former sommelier based in London.

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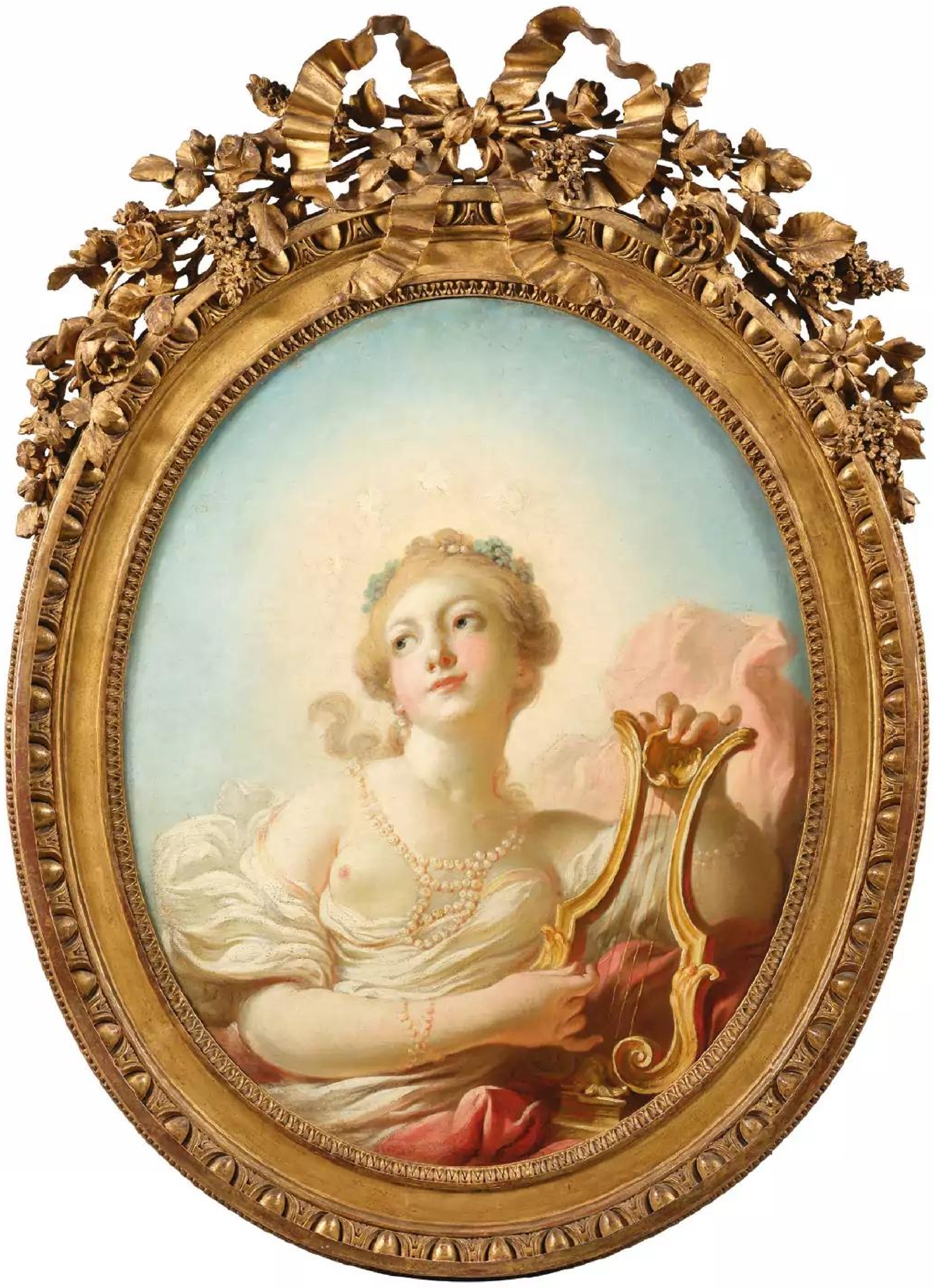

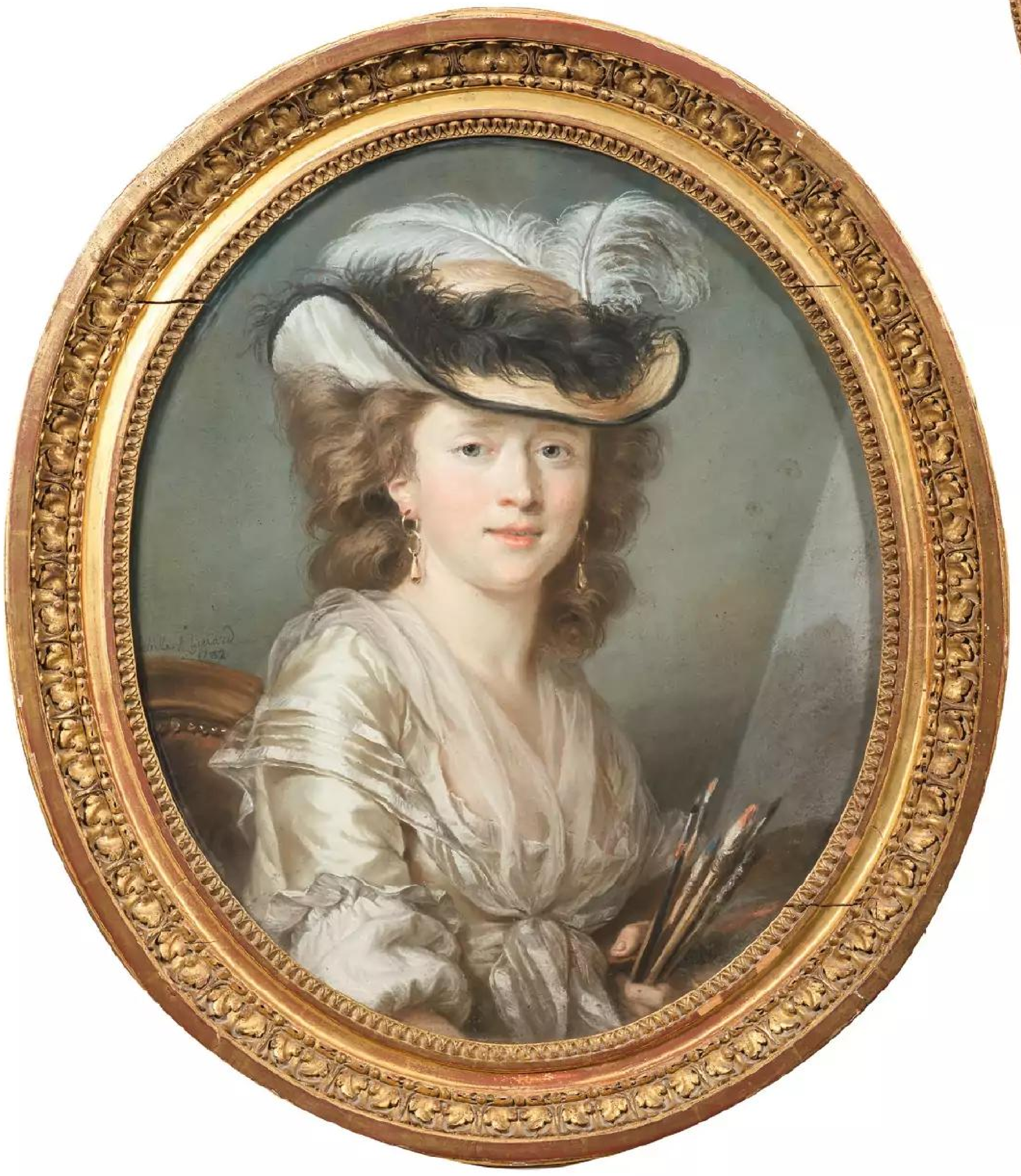

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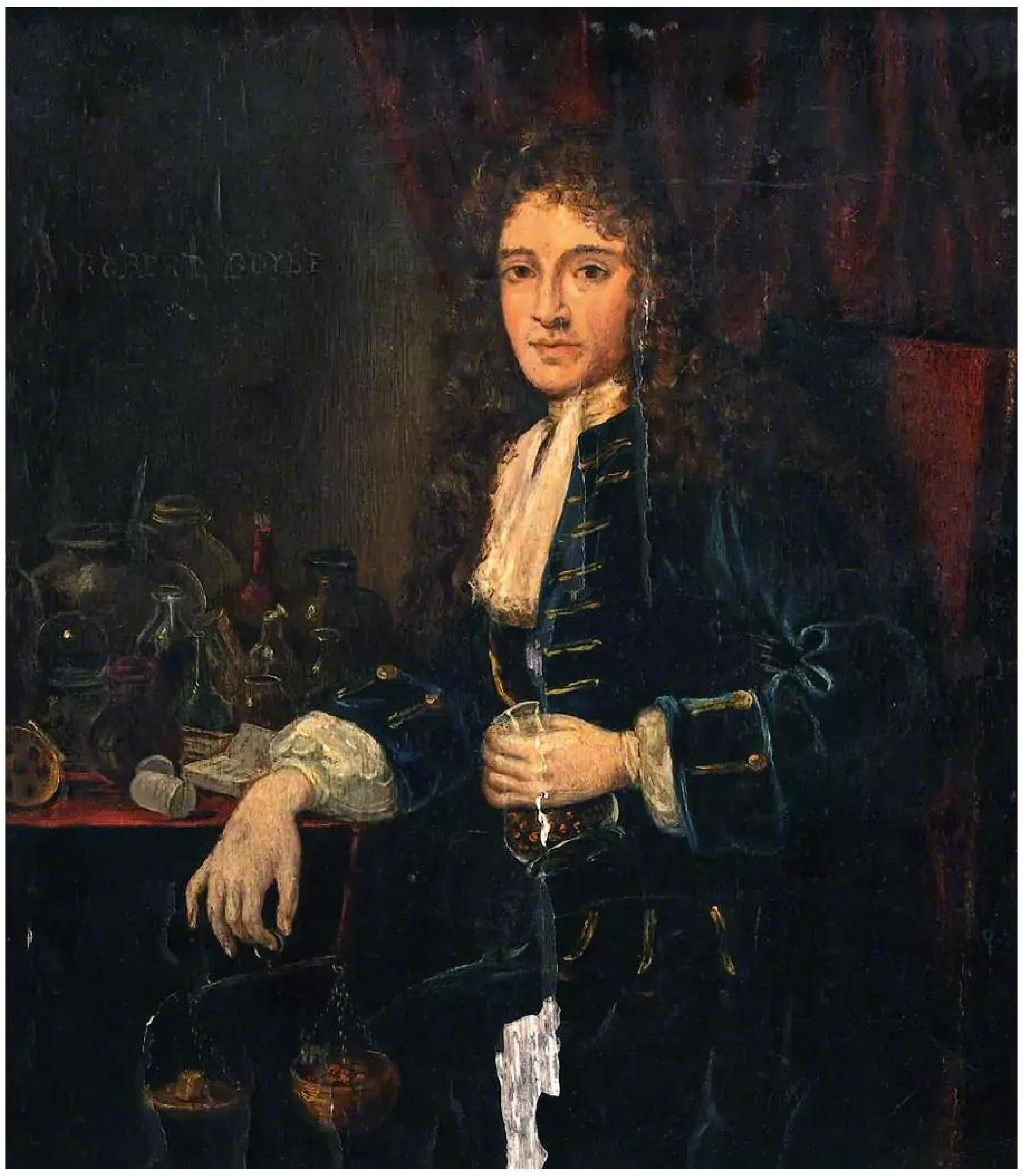
WINE

Critical drinking

Drink and thought have always had a close relationship.
CHRISTINA MAKRIS puts us in the picture



The Honourable Robert Boyle (1627–1691), Experimental Philosopher, c. 1900, unknown artist, oil on wood, 23.5×21.5cm. Wellcome Collection, London

Giorgione's *Three Philosophers* (*c.* 1508/09) depicts the Three Ages of Man, but can also be read as three stages of knowing. The old figure embodies inherited, bookish wisdom (ancient authority); the middle-aged man in the centre signals the transmission of classical science through Islamic medieval astronomy; the youngest figure turns outward towards empirical Renaissance observation, signalling a new science being born.

Another of Giorgione's paintings, *The Tempest* (*c.* 1506–08), was the philosopher Roger Scruton's favourite work of art. Scruton, a wine-lover, argued for the consciousness-expanding use of drink: 'Wine is not just an object of pleasure, but an object of knowledge; and the pleasure depends on the knowledge.'

A taste of how artists painted philosophers over the centuries reveals the ways in which images of drinking are also images for thinking, for testing our ideas about humanity's place in the world. It makes sense: a slight blur, of the kind that a moderate intake of alcohol brings about, can, paradoxically, sharpen attention, nudging the mind towards analogy, opening the door but not blowing it off its hinges.

So Raphael, in his *School of Athens* (1509), includes Epicurus, adorned with a wreath of vine leaves, among his catalogue of thinkers, implying that Epicureanism was also a path to truth.

Jusepe de Ribera's *Philosopher with a Wine Flask* (*c.* 1630–40) is a half-length portrait of a bearded philosopher dressed simply (torn white shirt, brown jacket) and holding books in one hand and a wine-flask vessel in the other. This was part of Ribera's 'ragged philosopher' series, in which thinkers are rendered as ascetics or beggars, carrying the symbols of knowledge (books) and of daily life or conviviality (wine-flask).

A portrait of Robert Boyle (1627–91) in the Wellcome Collection, by an unknown artist, depicts the philosopher and founder of modern chemistry clutching a vial with a crowded table of glassware behind him. As part of his experimental work on colours and chemical reactions, Boyle conducted tests on claret wine in the 1670s. His meticulous notebooks are among the earliest sensorial descriptions and tasting notes on aroma, flavour and colour.

Jean-Léon Gérôme's *Diogenes* (1860) places the Cynic philosopher surrounded by his dog companions, in a *pithos*, an earthenware tub used to store wine in antiquity. The work is clear and precise, and what seems like moral solitude (canine companions notwithstanding) becomes splendour. The vessel is a symbol of the wine jar as a cell for thought.

Before Socrates drank whatever vintage of hemlock he's about to swallow in Jacques Louis-David's *The Death of Socrates* (1787), he was debating virtue and morality in Athenian symposia, parties designed for drinking and talking. Anton Petter's *Socrates Reproaching Alcibiades* (1821) stages the philosopher's moral intervention as classical theatre. In a marble chamber of restraint and excess, Socrates confronts his gifted but wayward pupil. Neoclassical wisdom disciplines desire and antiquity can do no wrong.

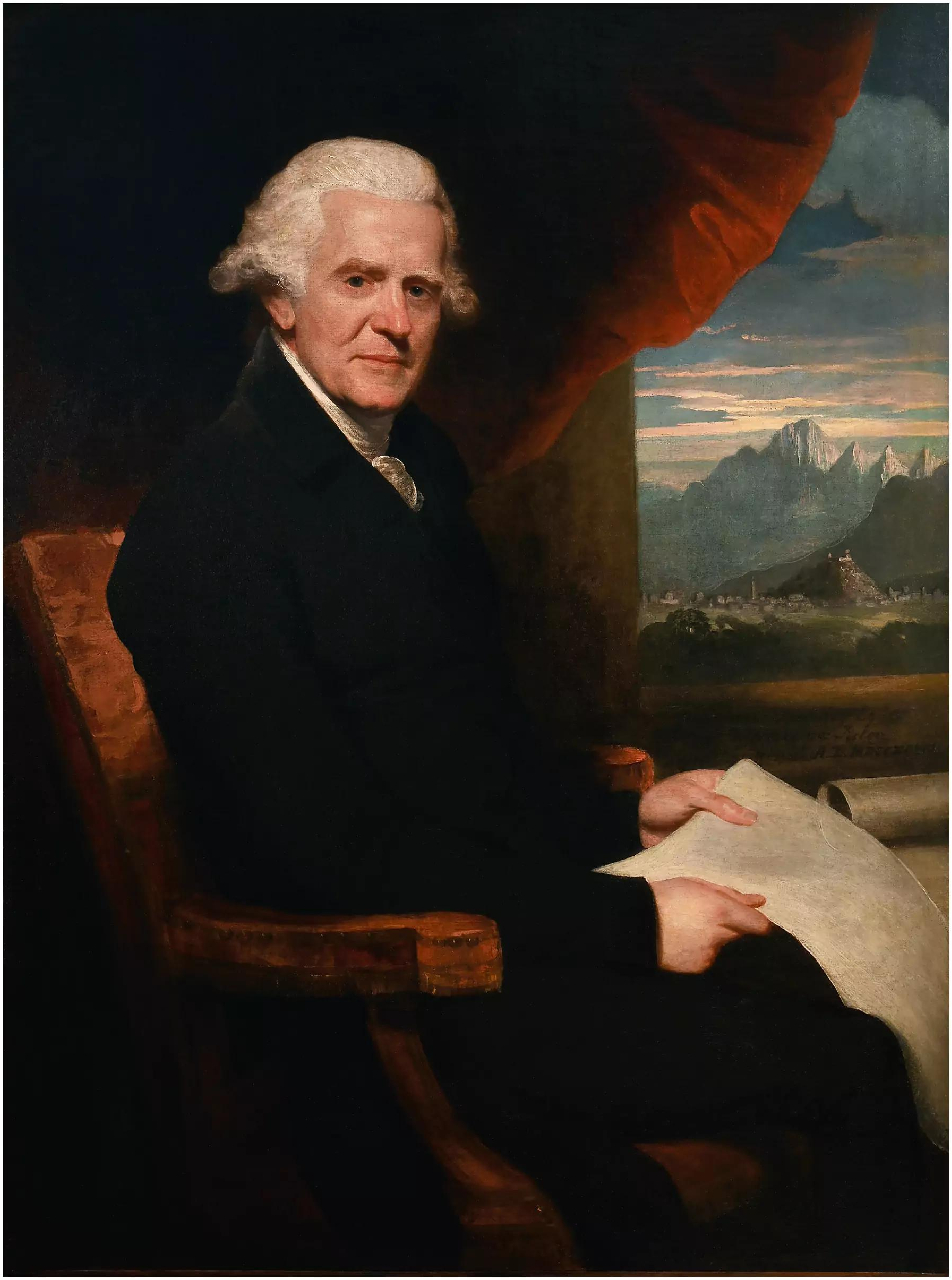
The benefits that come with age and intoxication are perhaps also conveyed in Matisse's ink drawing *Duo des deux philosophes* (1910). The artist and his lifelong friend Dr Léon Vassaux, sitting together over a shared glass, are the 'philosophers'. Matisse's caption reads: *À nos âges un seul verre de vin est suffisant et ne peut faire mal aux artères* ('At our age a single glass of wine is enough and can't harm the arteries'). Vassaux was also Matisse's physician, so the title presumably reflects doctor's orders.

Lyubov Popova's *Portrait of a Philosopher (Cubist Construction)* (*c.* 1915) translates the ancient figure of the thinker and his glass into the fractured grammar of modernism. Planes of ochre and grey intersect, suggesting that reflection itself has become material, constructed and unstable. The symposium is replaced by the structure of dynamic geometries of intellect and intoxication. In Popova's hands, the philosopher's cup is no longer an object of pleasure, but a vessel of perception, shattered, rearranged and made new.

Another solitary figure, seemingly half prophet, half phantom, lies in a timeless landscape in Salvador Dalí's *Philosopher Illuminated by the Light of the Moon and the Setting Sun* (1939). Here too there's a shattering of thought suggested by lunar light and the sunset's glow: what the mind knows through drinking is in doubt, and thinking is suspended between the material and the mystical.

The portrait of Scruton painted by the Chinese-born, London-based artist Lantian, which won the Ondaatje Prize for Portraiture in 2016, depicts him as a Pierrot figure, grounded but melancholy. That feels apt for the philosopher who wrote in his memoirs of the sensual awakening of making homemade wine, when delight of taste and touch opened heart as well as mind.

Christina Makris's Art in Vineyards: Cultivating Culture *is published by Skira.*



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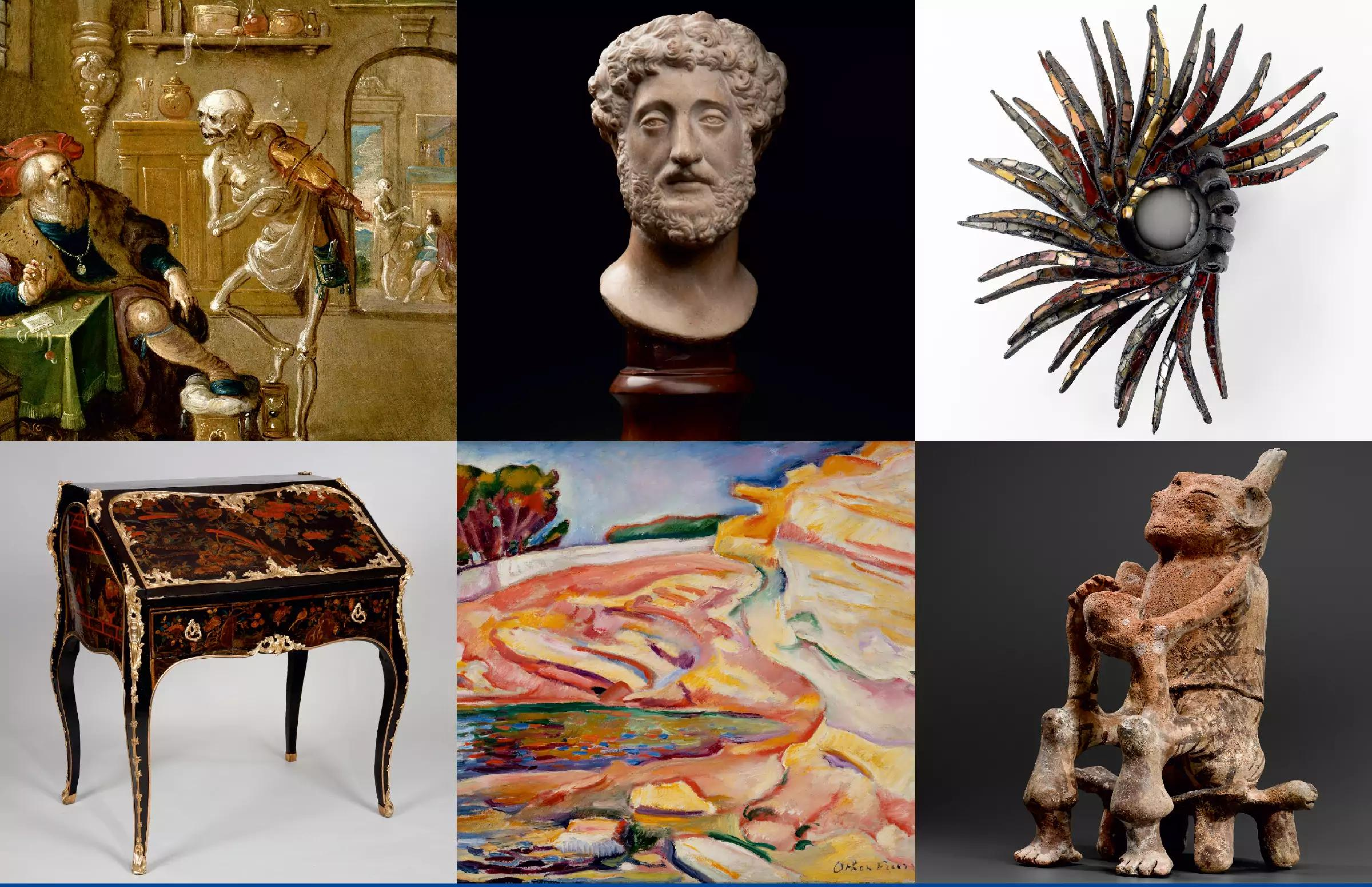

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PERSONALITY OF THE YEAR

Gabriele Finaldi and John Booth

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Tate

The National Gallery's extraordinary year was, according to John Booth, its chair of trustees, founded on food. When he took over the top job in September 2021, he had served on the board of the National Gallery for just a few months, as liaison trustee of the Tate Gallery. He didn't know Gabriele Finaldi, the gallery's director since 2015, personally: 'I'd only really met him on Zoom meetings.' Since Booth believes that the most crucial relationship in any institution is 'between the chief executive and the chair' he proposed that they get to know each other better.

First Finaldi took Booth out to an Italian restaurant – 'we shared a good bottle of wine and so on and we must have chatted for three hours, one of those good long lunches' – and later the hosting duties swapped and Booth invited Finaldi to his home in Sussex, where they cooked supper together ('I gave him my recipe for pasta with anchovies and spinach, he now uses it at home,' Booth says). Food eaten, wine drunk, they decided that yes, they could work together.

Thanks to those meals, a double act was formed that has yielded unprecedented results. First was the NG200 birthday celebrations marking the gallery's bicentenary that raised £95 million and culminated in a much-lauded remodelling of the Sainsbury Wing and a thoroughgoing rehang across the gallery. Then, in September, came the announcement of Project Domani, a hugely ambitious scheme to demolish St Vincent House behind the existing gallery, currently occupied by a hotel and offices, and construct an entirely new building to house a suite of galleries. Remarkably, £375 million has already been raised, based on two gifts of Brobdingnagian proportions – £150 million from Michael Moritz and Harriet Heyman's Crankstart foundation, and another £150 million from the Julia Rausing Trust. So Booth and Finaldi have, in the middle of challenging financial times, managed to raise nearly half a billion pounds in donations.

Booth comes from a business background with interests in e-commerce, media and telecommunications; he also set up his own charitable foundation and is, among other roles, vice president of the King's Trust, Chairman of the Royal Drawing School and a trustee of the Chatsworth Settlement and the Arts Foundation. Finaldi's provenance takes in a curatorship at the National Gallery with responsibility for the later Italian paintings and the Spanish collection and the role of deputy director for collections and research at the Prado, where he also oversaw the project to build a new extension in 2007 and the opening of the Research Centre in 2008.

Given their preexisting eminence, there is a distinct lack of ego in their dynamic. From the start of their relationship Finaldi was determined that they should appear as a pair: 'I was very keen that when we appeared publicly together we should both speak,' he says. 'So we're both saying things publicly and people are seeing us side by side and that we are working very closely together.'

When they started their collaboration in 2021, the bicentenary plans were already underway but, as Finaldi puts it, 'With John, those plans grew more ambitious, and it turned out to be a very wide-ranging project. He gives you the kind of confidence to plan big.' And given that fundraising has been at the top of their list, 'he did an amazing thing, which was when we began the fundraising process for NG200, he committed immediately a very considerable sum from his own foundation, and that sets you off'. Finaldi admits that it hardly needs saying, but 'he's a very kind man and very generous'.

Even so, the amount they and the National Gallery team have raised is still a shock to Booth: 'To be honest, having done a lot of fundraising in my life, this still amazes me.' That job is not over yet but Finaldi and Booth have a method that clearly works. 'I lead on the building of relationships with donors and prospective donors,' Booth says. 'I suppose what I do is to warm them up with the vision that the board and the director have agreed on and then, at the right moment, Gabriele will come and tell them the story – with all the conviction that he has – that this is the right direction for the institution. He's actually very good at fundraising because of his authenticity.'

These honed skills can't be put away just yet. Architect applications for the gallery on Orange Steet have now closed, with more than 60 designs submitted: the winner will be announced in early spring 2026. And although Booth's tenure has recently been extended for another four years, it will be a different Chair who cuts the ribbon on the new building. Nevertheless, he says, 'it will be nice to help choose the architect and see the building start to rise from the ground'. More prosaically, 'I hate to think of the running costs of a new building these days. I wouldn't want to see us build a new wing and not have the money to keep the lights on.'

It is Finaldi who will need to source the paintings that make it worth keeping those lights burning. 'That's a big ambition,' he says, 'because we want to have a representation of post-1900 painting which is of the same quality as the National Gallery collection.' Finaldi 'needed to be convinced that it could be done before we launched into it' and both he and Booth know that part of their future role will be to manage expectations. 'It will be done over time,' Finaldi stresses. 'In these circumstances, you've got to be quite innovative and quite original in the way you approach this challenge. For example, there's lots of opportunities for exchanges between institutions that we don't do enough of – we do it for exhibitions, but we don't do it on a longer-term basis.'

But before Finaldi and Booth hurtle headlong into that project they should find time to share another meal – homecooked or otherwise – and reflect on their momentous 2025.

Michael Prodger is a senior research fellow at the University of Buckingham and art critic for the New Statesman.

Photo: © the National Gallery

ARTIST OF THE YEAR

Hew Locke

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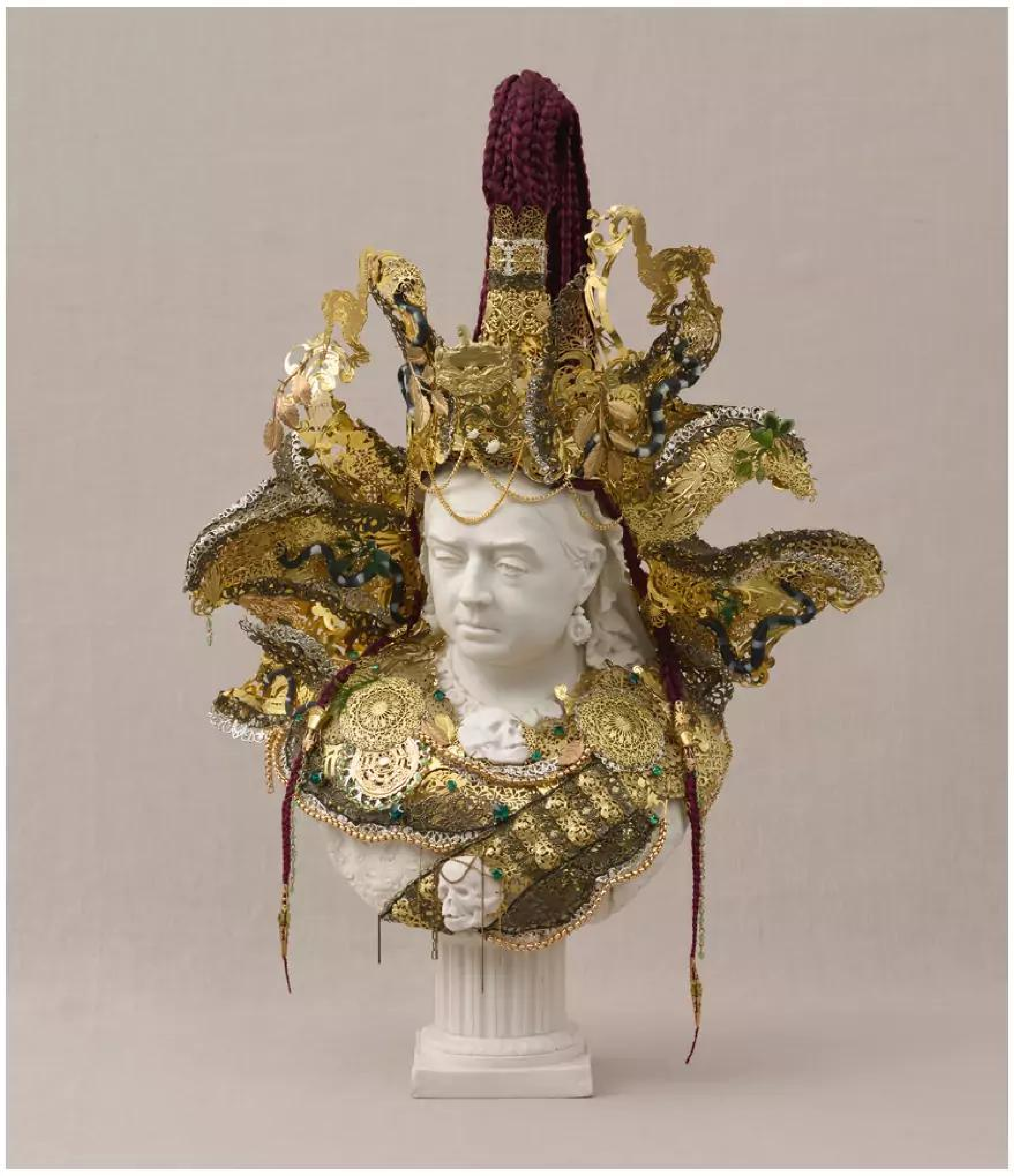
1901



Souvenir 20 (Queen Victoria), 2024, Hew Locke (b. 1959), mixed media on antique Parian ware bust, 63 × 46 × 19cm

For three decades, Hew Locke's art has unfolded across continents, materials and ideas. His work – now widely recognised – continues to question systems of power and illuminate their persistence. *Apollo*'s award acknowledges the artist's remarkable career, in which he has persistently reshaped the visual symbols that inform our notions of identity and belonging – particularly the symbols of empire.

My first encounter with Locke's work was 25 years ago, as a recent art-history graduate, when I saw his astonishing installation *Hemmed in Two* at the V&A. Wedged between the museum's Doric columns, it was made entirely of cardboard, but had an immense presence. I knew that this was the work of an important artist. Locke had found a singular means of expressing complex and fraught ideas in the simplest materials and methods, with a unique clarity and originality. I have followed his work ever since.

What has stood out to me over the years is how Locke has deployed his distinctive ornamental aesthetic and command of materials to question the regalia and symbols that shape our world. From heraldry and coats of arms to crowns, statues and monuments, his subjects are drawn from the public sphere. His work offers a sustained, original and thought-provoking reimagination of how such emblems can be transformed and understood anew.

Locke's deep interest in monuments as sites of contested history became a cornerstone of this inquiry. His adornment of a photo of the statue of Edward Colston in Bristol in 2006, for example, presciently recast a civic symbol long before its public reckoning. In other works, the sculptural motif of boats has carried its own potent freight of history, migration and hope. His art has often been characterised in terms of its ornamental excess, yet these qualities are tools of inquiry, a means of exposing how beauty and violence have long been intertwined. Locke draws us into the visual richness of his work only to confront uncomfortable truths. His intricate assemblages transform ornament itself into a critical language: medals and beads, shells and sequins accumulate not only for spectacle but to hint at deeper, concealed histories.

The recent trajectory of Locke's career, on both sides of the Atlantic, has been remarkable to witness. In Britain, his epic *Procession* for Tate Britain's Duveen commission in 2022 marked a career-defining moment. The installation of more than 100 richly adorned figures formed a collective journey through time, resonating deeply with audiences. This success was followed by his election to the Royal Academy, an exhibition at the British Museum ('What Have We Here?') and an OBE.

In the United States, Locke became more widely known in 2022 through his Met Facade commission, *Gilt*: four hollow trophies displayed on the museum's neoclassical frontage, pointing to the intertwined histories of art and empire embedded in that architectural landmark. In 2024, the *Procession* made its transatlantic journey from London to Boston.

It was an honour to collaborate with Locke on his exhibition 'Hew Locke: Passages', currently at the Yale Center for British Art (until 11 January 2026), and the accompanying monograph, which surveys his career to date. To me, Locke's work exemplifies the patient unfolding of an artist's vision in a way that continually meets the demands of the present.

Martina Droth, director of the Yale Center for British Art, New Haven.

This page photo: Anna Arc; courtesy and © Hew Locke ; opposite page photo: John Hasselt

Hew Locke at the Yale Center
for British Art in October 2025

SHORTLIST

Jenny Saville

A major retrospective at the National Portrait Gallery this year, displaying Saville's unflinching representation of flesh in all its shades, was a resounding success. The series of monumental nudes that launched her career in 1992 still looks as fresh and impressive as it did then. Yet in a series of more recent works (also at the NPG) – painted, like the earlier ones, from photographs – it is possible to see an artist experimenting and pushing her practice in increasingly bold ways.

Wael Shawky

Shawky's entry for the Egyptian Pavilion at last year's Venice Biennale drew huge crowds. *Drama 1882* – a film of an opera (written by the artist) about the nationalist Urabi revolution against imperial influence in Egypt (1879–82) – was the prelude to a year that has seen the artist's complexity and narrative brilliance rewarded with exhibitions in Seoul, Daegu, Los Angeles, Edinburgh and Arles. Shawky's explorations of artifice and power create compelling art for our times.

Amy Sherald

Alongside 'American Sublime', an exhibition of her work at the Whitney, Sherald was supposed to be the first Black artist to have an exhibition at the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery; when she was told that a portrait of a transgender Statue of Liberty might be removed, her response was to cancel the show. She has become a symbol of protest and resistance in a fearful cultural climate in the United States.

Caroline Walker

This year Walker's first major museum exhibition, 'Mothering', ran at the Hepworth Wakefield before travelling to Pallant House. There is something radical about the attentiveness with which she observes her subjects and how she chooses those subjects. She presents an emphatically female gaze, allowing the spotlight to fall on aspects of life – mothering, caring, loving – frequently overlooked, and in a way that reinvigorates the medium of paint.

William Kentridge

This has been a particularly strong year for the South African artist. His centrality to contemporary art is now taken for granted but a dual museum show as part of a celebration of his 70th birthday is a reminder of how innovative his work is. 'Listen to the Echo' at the Museum Folkwang, Essen, and the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden, plus a festival across Dresden, show the variety of Kentridge's work from paint to print and projections to puppet shows.

Photo: Tyler Mitchell; courtesy Gagosian; artwork: © Jenny Saville, all rights reserved, DACS 2025 / Photo: George Darrell, Lisson Gallery; courtesy Sfeir-Semler Gallery/Lisson Gallery/Lia Rumma/Barakat Contemporary/ Photo: Justin T. Gellerson; courtesy Hauser & Wirth / Photo: Alix McIntosh; courtesy Caroline Walker/Stephen Friedman Gallery, London and New York/GRIMM, Amsterdam, New York and London/Ingleby Gallery, Edinburgh / Photo: Thibaud Moritz/AFP via Getty Images

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MUSEUM OPENING OF THE YEAR

Frick Collection, New York

Reopened April 2025

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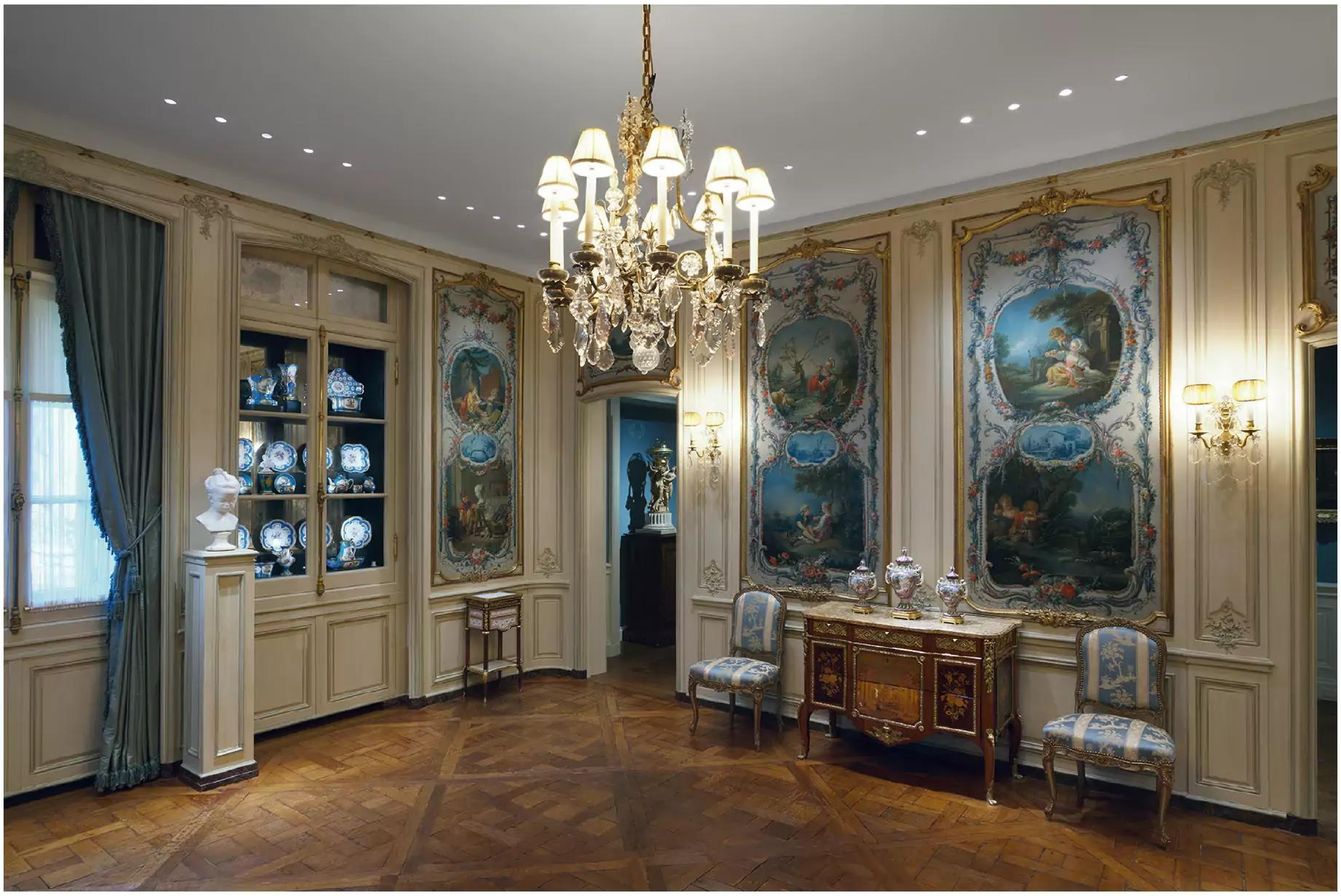


The Boucher room in the renovated Frick Collection, New York

A five-year, $220m restoration and expansion has scarcely disrupted the Frick Collection's longstanding illusion that the original owners will soon return from another Grand Tour shopping spree. In the 1910s, the block-long limestone compound was commissioned for the coal and steel tycoon Henry Clay Frick and his family. In 1935, it was enlarged for adaptation into a museum and library. By the 2000s, the collection had outgrown its home, but some overly obtrusive proposals for expansion caused controversy and had to be scrapped. The museum then set out, with a team led by the architect Annabelle Selldorf, to upgrade existing spaces and pack new limestone wings with rooms for public programmes, changing exhibitions, offices, conservation equipment and eateries.

Rainbows of veiny marble pave the new corridors and stairs, and belowground, a foyer lined in corrugated wood leads to an egg-shaped auditorium. The public can, for the first time, ascend to the Frick family's upstairs quarters via a grand carpeted staircase, where reliefs of musical putti in togas frolic amid organ pipes. In the new and old galleries, familiar standouts by artists including Rembrandt, Vermeer, Ingres and Manet have been interwoven with contemporary art installations, recent acquisitions and pieces from storage, such as Renaissance bronze medals, enamelled pocket watches and Chinese and European porcelain. City grime has been swabbed away from original milky skylights, lavishly carved woodwork, and gleaming chandeliers and doorknobs. The museum's gardens, with sunburst motifs on pebbly paths, have been newly replanted with hydrangeas and hornbeams. Limestone armless caryatids from the 1910s, which had been warehoused in the 1930s, stand sentinel once again in an entry hall.

Visitors (many of whom have, since the April reopening, queued around the block) can be seen closely examining the newly restored 1910s details, even down to the velvety upholstery, shimmery wallcoverings, and tasselled window drapes. The public, amid all the museum's new amenities, is noticeably more aware of how the Fricks lived.

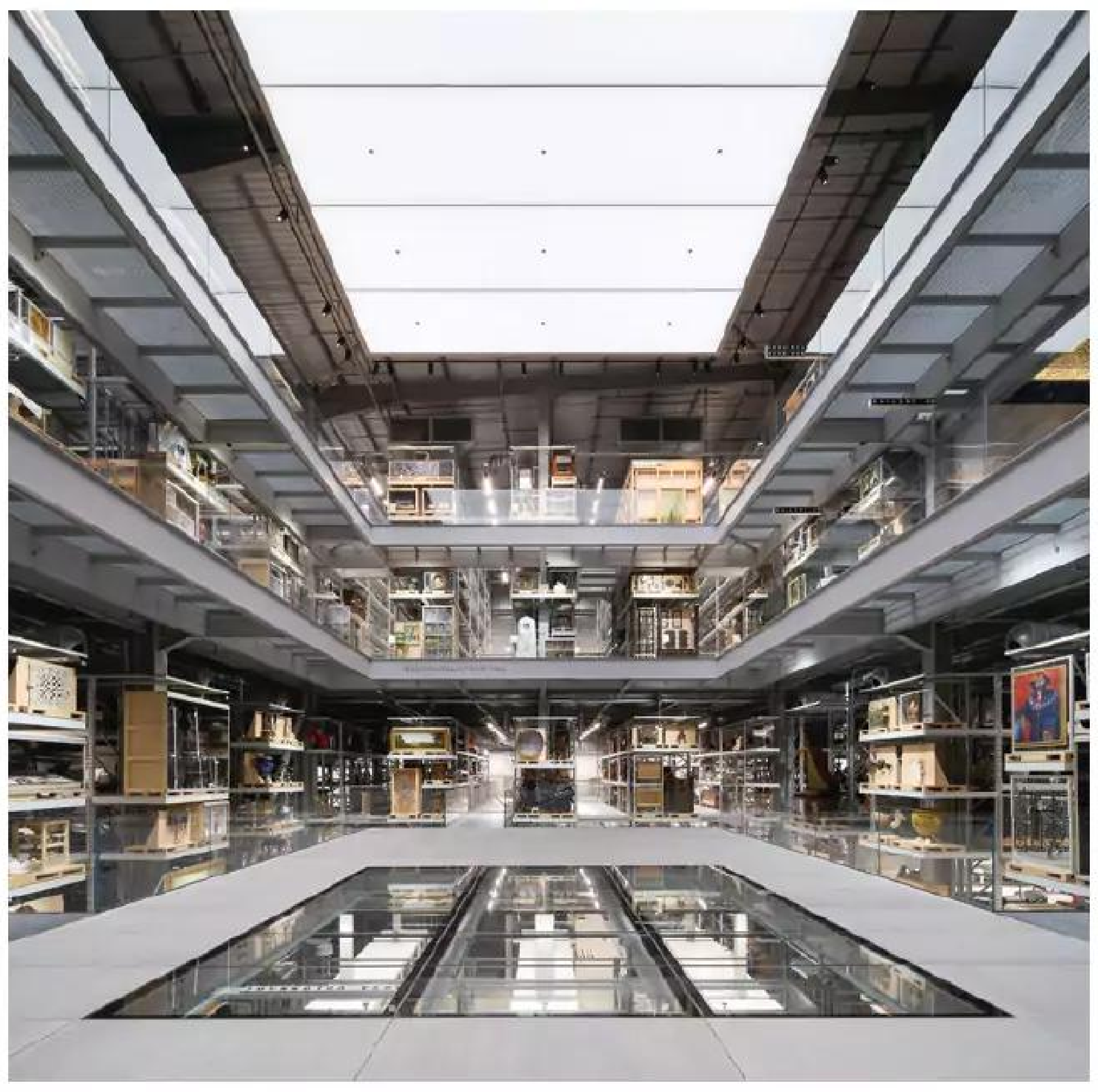
Eve M. Kahn, author of, most recently, Queen of Bohemia Predicts Own Death: Gilded-Age Journalist Zoe Anderson Norris *(Fordham University Press).*

Photo: Joseph Coscia Jr.

SHORTLIST

National Gallery, London – Sainsbury Wing
Reopened May 2025

The culmination of the National Gallery's bicentenary was the reopening, after two years, of the Sainsbury Wing. The £85m project encompassed a redesign by Annabelle Selldorf, which included brightening and decluttering the ground level and reintroducing views on to Trafalgar Square. A rehang has allowed some 250 more works to be on permanent display and the creation of a selection of thematic rooms, as well as rooms dedicated to individual artists, among them Rubens and Titian.



V&A East Storehouse, London
Opened May 2025

The latest development on the former Olympic park in Stratford is an experiment: a storage-depot-cum-museum, cleverly designed by Diller Scofidio and Renfro. Some 600,000 items from the V&A collection are available, among the open display racks or through the 'order an object' system, which allows visitors to view (and sometimes handle) objects up close. The David Bowie Centre, dedicated to the late musician's archive, can also be found here.

Museu de Arte de São Paulo
Reopened March 2025

Lina Bo Bardi's glass-and-concrete home for Brazil's first modern art museum, a landmark of modernist architecture, opened in 1968. It contains a trove of 20th-century Brazilian art and perhaps the finest collection of European art in South America. The new Pietro Maria Bardi building (named after Lina's husband, the museum's first director) is a 14-storey, $43m slender black extension, designed by Metro Arquitetos Associados, that nearly doubles the museum's space and is connected to the existing building by an underground tunnel.

Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw
Opened February 2025

Warsaw's modern art museum has existed since 2005, but until this year led a nomadic existence. Its new permanent home is a sleek white box designed by Thomas Phifer, on the Plac Defilad in the heart of the city. The building features huge, high-ceilinged galleries, a twisted central staircase leading to an upper floor with panoramic views of Warsaw, and smaller wood-panelled 'city rooms' peppered between the galleries.

Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York – Michael C. Rockefeller Wing
Reopened May 2025

A four-year, $70m renovation by Why Architecture in collaboration with Beyer Blinder Belle Architects has opened up the Met's collections from Africa, Oceania and the Americas to natural light. This gives monumental works such as the *bis* poles of Papua New Guinea greater prominence. The design is partly inspired by the works' places of origin – the entrance gallery's barrel-ribbed ceiling, for example, takes its cue from the Great Mosque of Djenné, Mali.

Photo: Edmund Sumner; © The National Gallery, London / Photo: © Hufton and Crow / Photo: Leonardo Finotti / Photo: © Wirkus Warsaw 2024 / Photo: Bridgit Beyer

EXHIBITION OF THE YEAR

Siena: The Rise of Painting, 1300–1350

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Installation view of 'Siena: The Rise of Painting, 1300–1350' at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 2024–25

Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (13 October 2024–26 January) and National Gallery, London (8 March–22 June)

Greeted with near-unanimous five-star reviews on both sides of the Atlantic, 'Siena: The Rise of Painting' magnificently demonstrated that a scholarly exhibition of Old Master paintings that included no works by household names can enthral a large public. For once, the claim 'a once-in-a-generation event' was justified: with more than 100 exhibits, most of great fragility, this was the largest exhibition in more than 20 years devoted to the art of Siena in the half century before the Black Death and nothing like it will be seen for decades to come. To make sense of this exceptionally rich subject, its curators focused on the innovations of Duccio and three younger artists, Pietro and Ambrogio Lorenzetti and Simone Martini. The exhibition's greatest coup was the reuniting of the eight surviving predella panels from the back of Duccio's *Maestà*, lent from Madrid, London, Siena, Fort Worth, New York and Washington. But scarcely less impressive was the reassembling of Martini's Orsini polyptych, split between Antwerp, Paris and Berlin. Among other highlights, all displayed with theatrical flair, was the newly restored Pieve polyptych by Pietro Lorenzetti, lent in its entirety by Santa Maria della Pieve in Arezzo. The tight focus on a small group of painters was balanced by a rich selection of manuscripts, sculptures, textiles and, especially, goldsmiths' work, which explored the way new artistic ideas moved between media. The exhibition also looked beyond the city walls to show how Siena's wealth drew in textiles from Iran, carpets from Turkey and silks from Mongolian territories. Such luxury objects influenced the Sienese artists and craftsmen who undertook major commissions in Florence, Naples and Avignon, so spreading the city's influence across Europe. Deeply thoughtful in conception, intellectually ambitious and inspired in execution, the exhibition will have a long-term effect on not only scholarship but also the popular perception that art in Italy before 1500 is essentially a Florentine story.

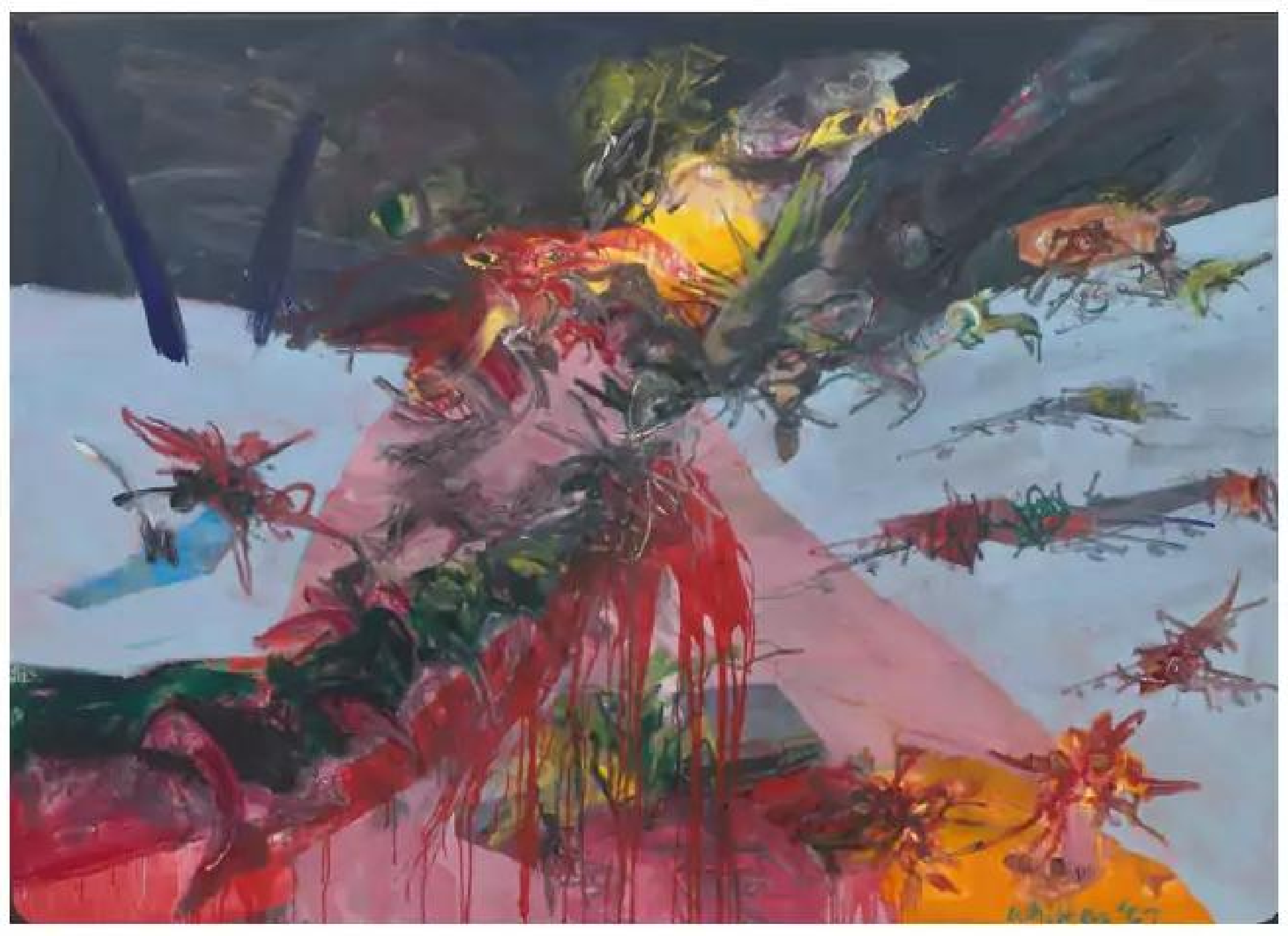
Michael Hall, former editor of Apollo.

Photo: Eileen Travell; courtesy the Met

SHORTLIST

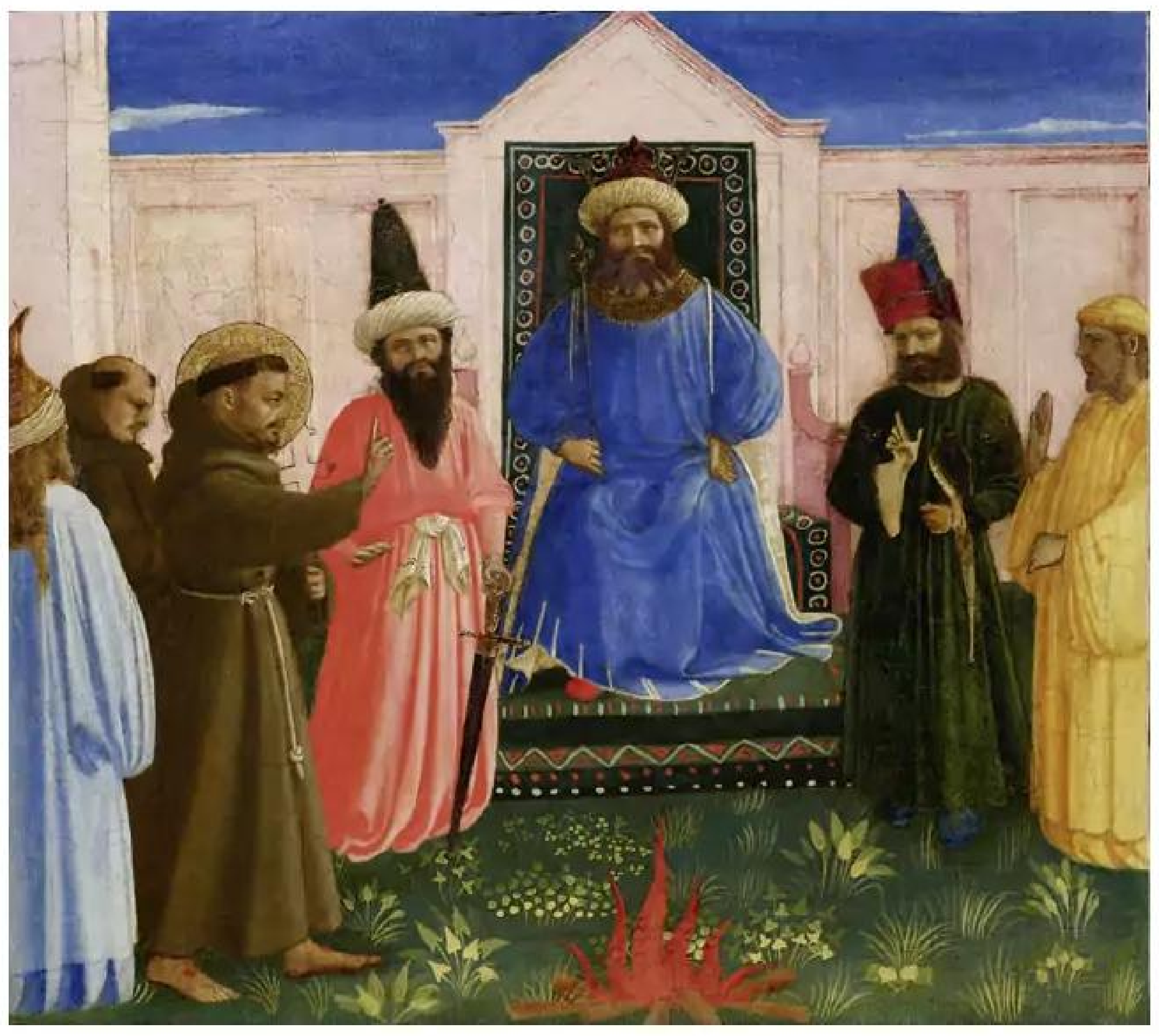
Sèvres Extraordinaire!
Bard Graduate Center, New York
10 September–16 November

Alongside the 18th-century masterpieces we associate with the Sèvres manufactory, this exhibition took us into more unfamiliar territory: 19th- and 20th-century works, with contributions from Auguste Rodin, Ettore Sottsass and Louise Bourgeois. The Bard Graduate Center took the opportunity to treat familiar pieces as a form of sculpture in the broadest sense – and paid welcome attention to their making. The catalogue will be an indispensible resource on Sèvres for years to come.



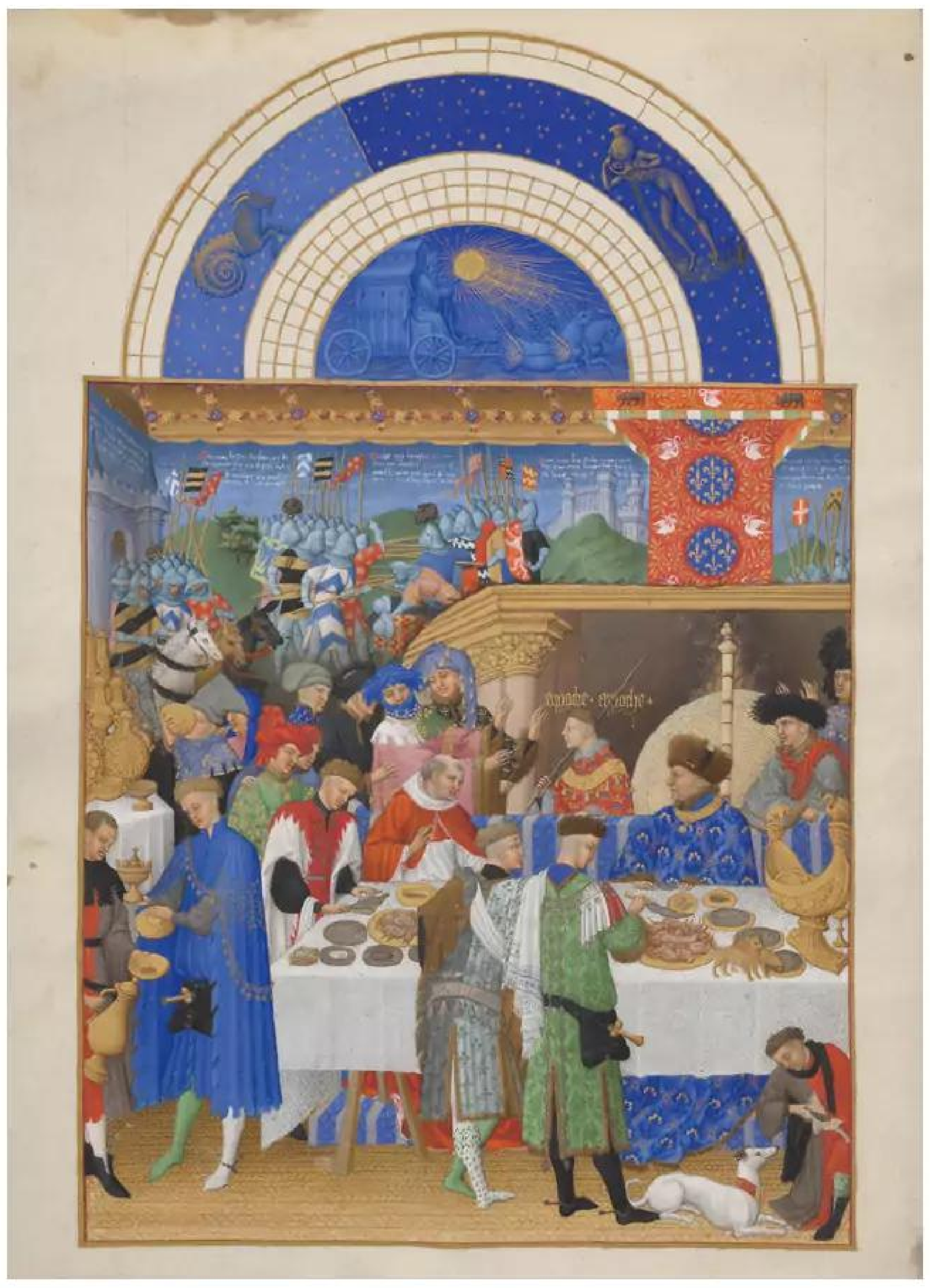
Jack Whitten: The Messenger
Museum of Modern Art, New York
23 March–2 August

MoMA gave over its sixth floor to some 180 paintings, sculptures and works on paper from Whitten's long, restless career. The nature of what he called his 'experiments' kept changing – from messy, gestural abstraction to cooler, geometric forms. The show included paintings made with Whitten's squeegee-like 'developer' and casts of objects, made using paint and then fixed to the wall, as well as collages of tiles of acrylic paint. It cemented Whitten's status as a great post-war abstractionist.



Fra Angelico
Palazzo Strozzi and Museo di San Marco, Florence
26 September–25 January 2026

A bumper year for exhibitions of Renaissance art continues with this exhibition devoted to Fra Angelico. Although the painter has been the subject of recent shows at the Prado (2019) and the Isabella Stewart Gardner in Boston (2018), this exhibition in two venues is the most comprehensive in years, with some 140 works, including panels reunited from seven major altarpieces and, at the Museo di San Marco, a focus on illuminations for books.



Les Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry
Château de Chantilly
7 June–5 October

This famous late medieval manuscript has been on show only twice in the last 80 years – even scholars rarely see it. Its restoration provided the opportunity to view the calendar pages of the first two quires unbound and the Limbourg brothers' miniatures, with their marvellous details, up close. Also on display were all the books of hours known to have belonged to the manuscript's owner, Jean, Duc de Berry.

Sam Gilliam: Sewing Fields
Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin
13 June–16 November 2026

Late in his career, Sam Gilliam took his Color Field experiments on to canvas, turning stained swatches into collages somewhere between painting and sculpture. IMMA shows Ireland's significant influence on Gilliam and highlights the importance of sewing – in these paintings, almost a form of drawing. This small show revealed yet another aspect of the artist's inventiveness and made the case for a full restrospective.

Photo: Tony Querrec; © RMN-Grand Palais (Sèvres - Manufacture / Photo: Jonathan Muzikar; © 2025 Museum of Modern Art, New York / Photo: Punctum/Bertram Kober; © Lindenau-Museum / Photo: Michel Urtado; © RMN-Grand Palais - Domaine de Chantilly / Photo: Louis Haugh

BOOK OF THE YEAR

Toi Te Mana: An Indigenous History of Māori Art

Deidre Brown and Ngarino Ellis, with Jonathan Mane-Wheoki
(Auckland University Press/University of Chicago Press)

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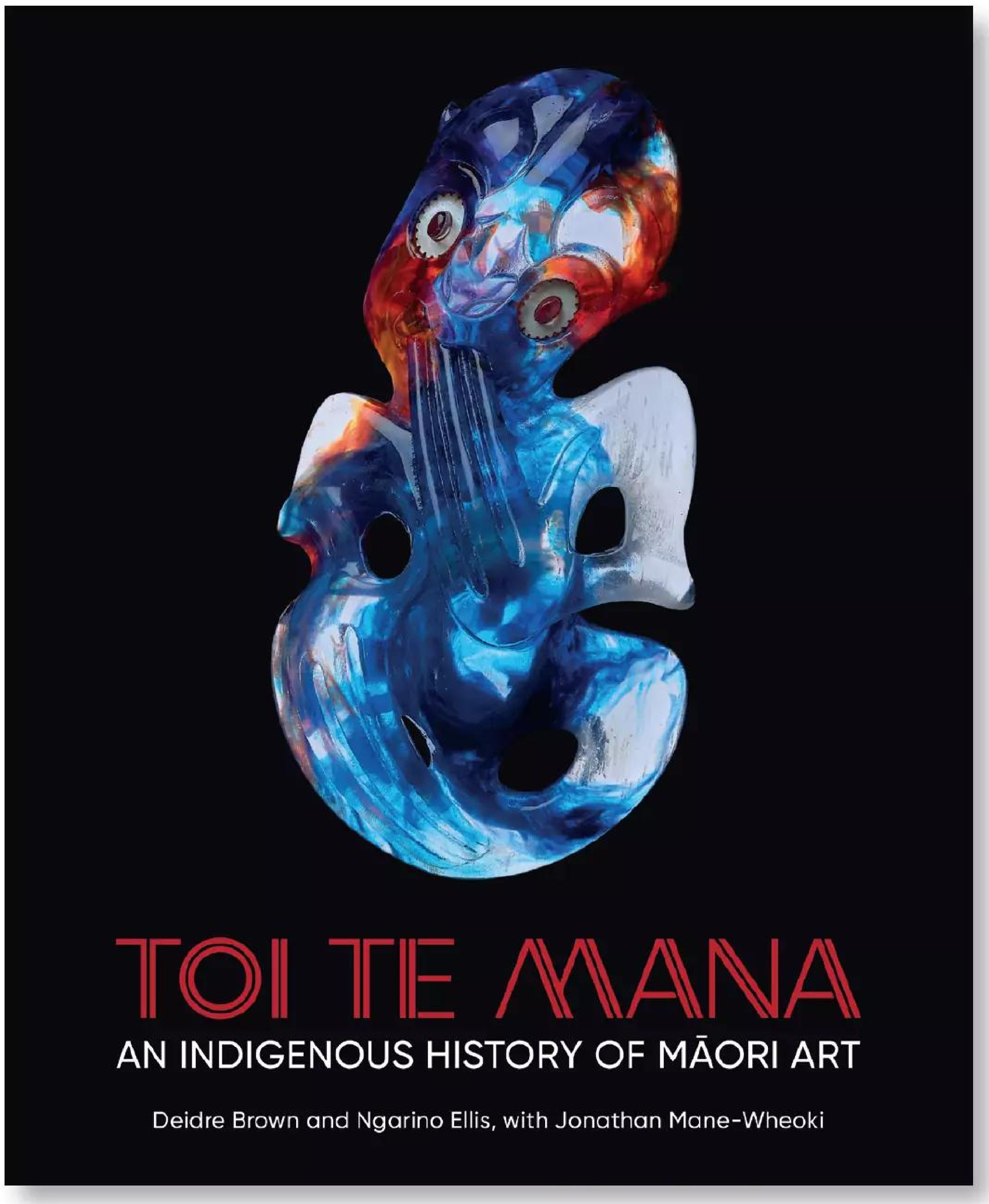

TOI TE MANA
AN INDIGENOUS HISTORY OF MĀORI ART
Deidre Brown and Ngarino Ellis, with Jonathan Mane-Wheoki

Oceanic art has inspired a vast literature. Since the early 20th century, hundreds of catalogues and monographs have highlighted the collections of museums, explored genres and traditions and, more recently, celebrated contemporary practice. The achievement of *Toi Te Mana* (which roughly translates as 'arts of power') is of another order altogether. Its subtitle points to its distinctiveness. This is both a work grounded in and animated by Māori concepts – of time, place, people and valuables – and the outcome of sophisticated art-historical research, which deftly mobilises the discipline's foundational methods and the feminist and postcolonial perspectives that have challenged the field.

The book promises and delivers a survey of core practices and mediums over time: sculpture, architecture, textiles, rock art and body art. Its accounts of colonialism and innovation, via an early Māori turn towards figurative painting, work on paper and uses of iron, will surprise and intrigue those who only know this great world art tradition through displays in northern hemisphere museums. Chapters on Māori modernists from the 1950s set the scene for contemporary movements since the 1980s and the recent success of Māori artists at the Venice Biennale and across major international museums.

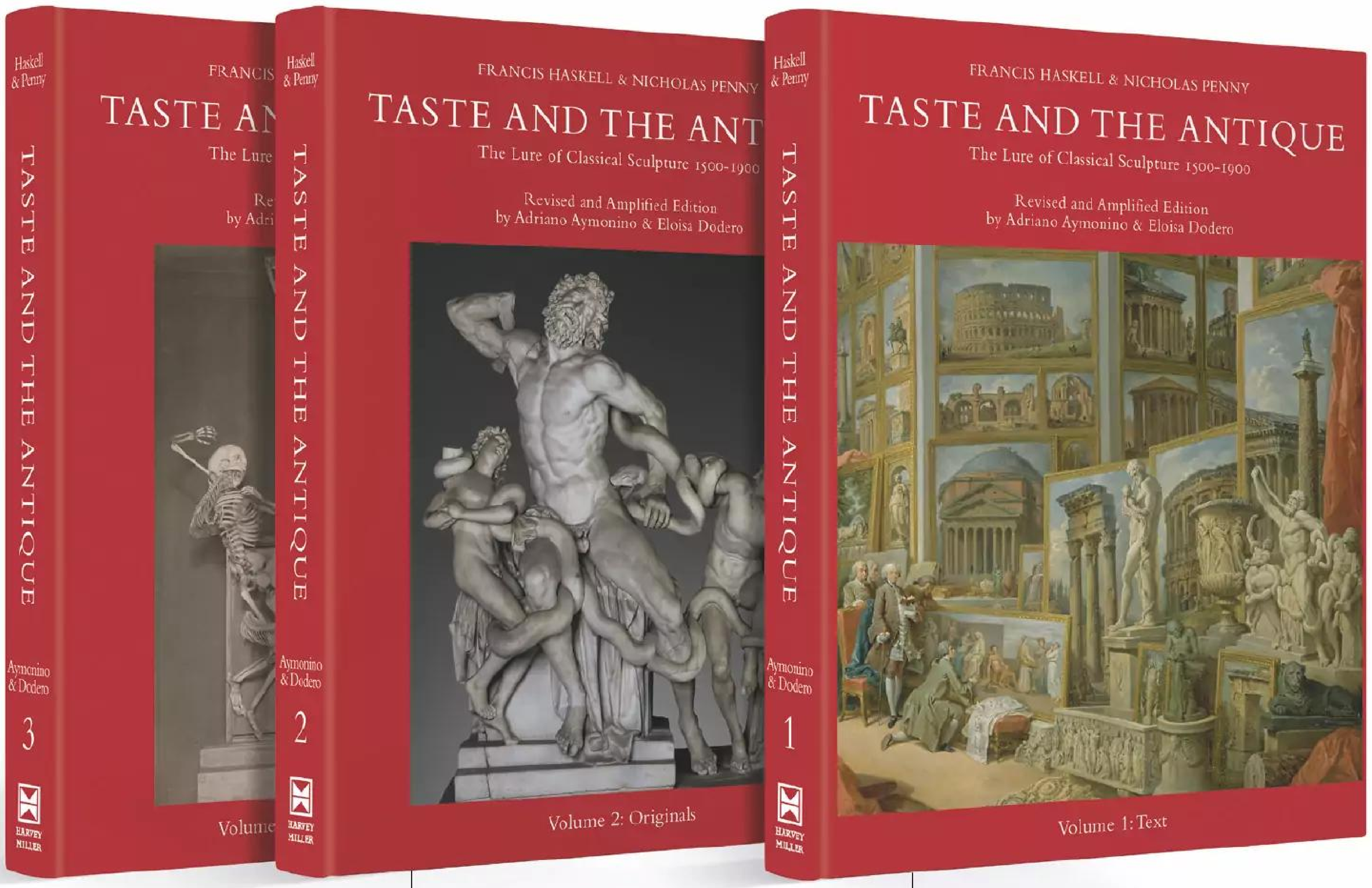
Toi Te Mana is remarkable not only for its lucid broader history but also for fascinating detail regarding specific works, images and histories, and even of quirks such as notable fakes. This is a social and cultural history, yet one consistently attentive to art and artists. The book is dedicated to the scholar, curator and museum leader Jonathan Mane-Wheoki (1943–2014), who contributed to the publication's framing and to its writing up to the time of his death. Jonathan was deeply knowledgeable, imaginative and generous: these too are the qualities of this magisterial volume.

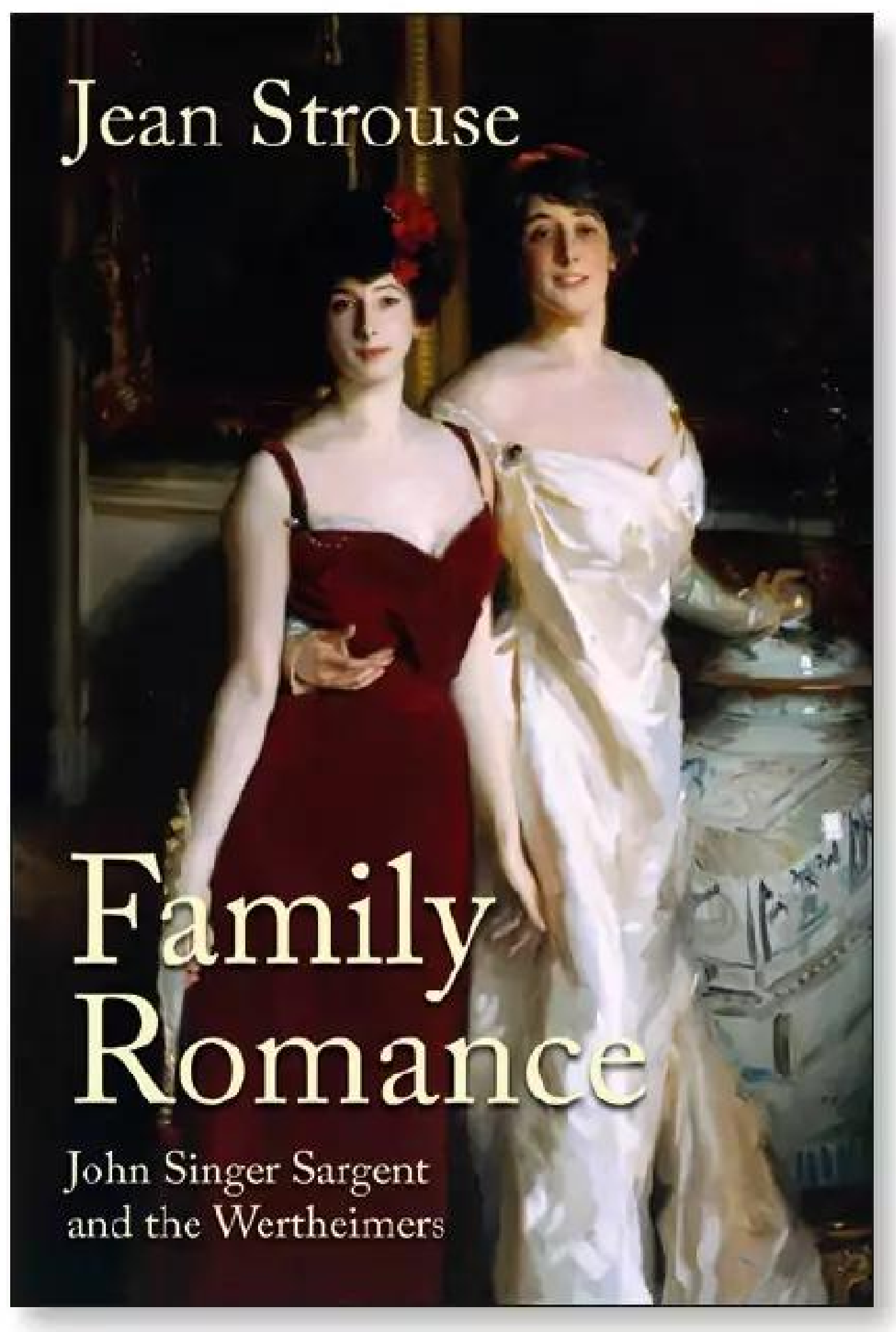
Nicholas Thomas, director of the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge, and co-curator of 'Oceania' at the Royal Academy of Arts and the Musée du Quai Branly – Jacques Chirac, 2018–19.

SHORTLIST

Taste and the Antique: The Lure of Classical Sculpture, 1500–1900
Francis Haskell and Nicholas Penny; revised and amplified by Adriano Aymonino and Eloisa Dodero (Brepols)

The original 1981 edition of *Taste and the Antique* was a scholarly landmark. This revised edition includes expanded footnotes taking account of the wealth of scholarship that has appeared since. For Volume Two, almost every sculpture has been photographed in colour from multiple perspectives. The final volume tracks the mutation of the 95 sculptures into other forms, from bronzes to prints and posters and textbooks.


FRANCIS HASKELL & NICHOLAS PENNY
TASTE AND THE ANTIQUE
The Lure of Classical Sculpture 1500–1900
Revised and Amplified Edition by Adriano Aymonino & Eloisa Dodero
Volume 1: Text
Volume 2: Originals
Haskell & Penny
Aymonino & Dodero
HARVEY MILLER

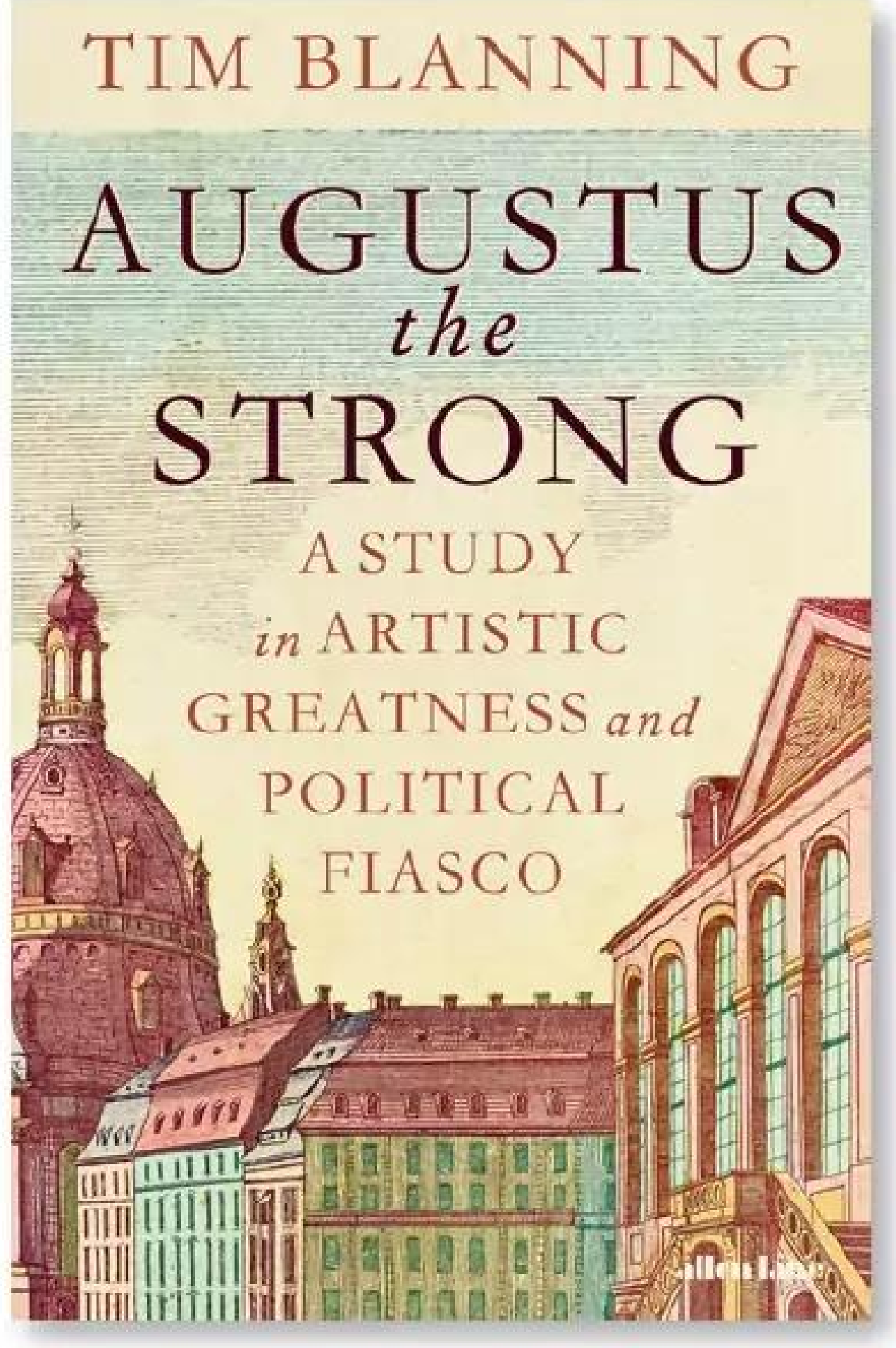

Jean Strouse
Family Romance
John Singer Sargent and the Wertheimers

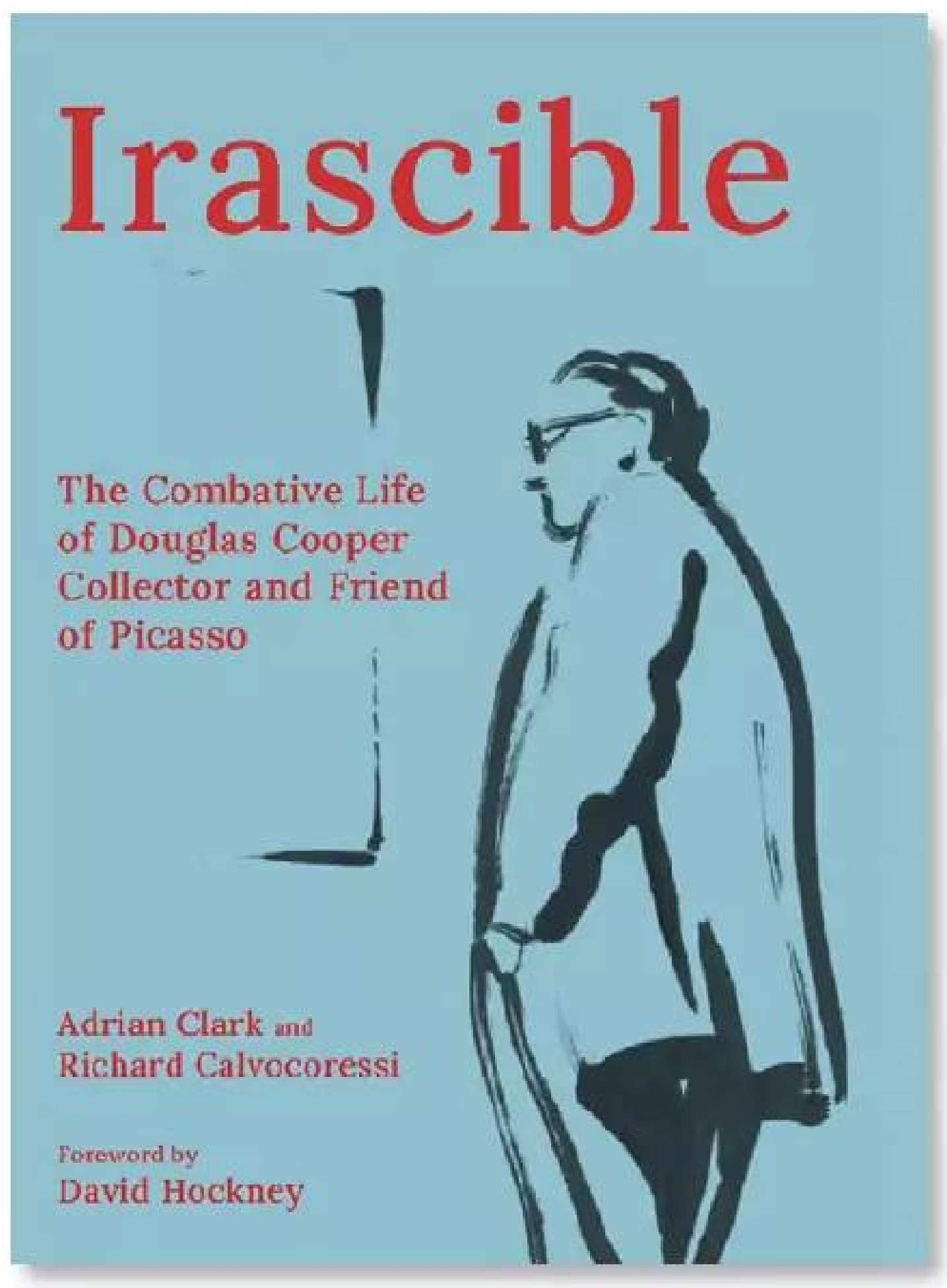
Family Romance: John Singer Sargent and the Wertheimers
Jean Strouse
(Farrar, Straus & Giroux)

In 1898 Sargent painted portraits of the art dealer Asher Wertheimer and his wife, Flora, on their silver wedding anniversary. Over the next few years he painted 10 more of their family. In this focused study, Strouse describes the painter's relationships with each family member while telling a bigger story about the nature of Edwardian society.

Augustus the Strong: A Study in Artistic Greatness and Political Fiasco
Tim Blanning (Allen Lane)

Augustus the Strong has finally found a biographer capable of capturing the complexities of the Elector of Saxony and sometime King of Poland. While much of the book inevitably focuses on Augustus's many battles, Blanning also describes his extraordinary patronage of artists, musicians and especially porcelain-makers, while discussing the role of patronage in projecting absolute power.


TIM BLANNING
AUGUSTUS the STRONG
A STUDY in ARTISTIC GREATNESS and POLITICAL FIASCO

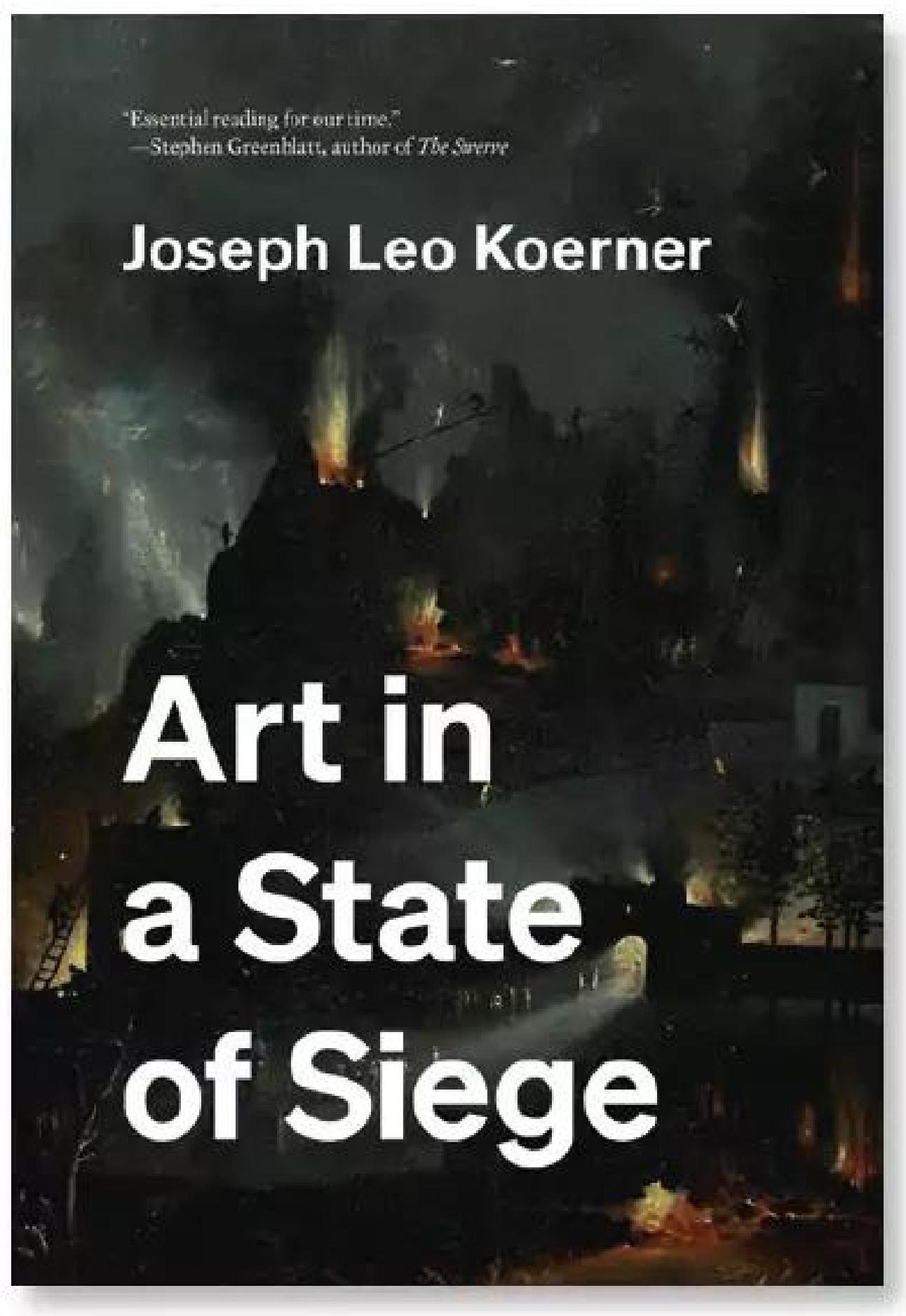

Irascible
The Combative Life of Douglas Cooper Collector and Friend of Picasso
Adrian Clark and Richard Calvocoressi
Foreword by David Hockney

Irascible: The Combative Life of Douglas Cooper, Collector and Friend of Picasso
Adrian Clark and Richard Calvocoressi
(Yale University Press)

With a title that doesn't hold back about their subject's temperament, the authors are free to lay out Cooper's achievements as a dealer and champion of cubism. While Clark handles the life, Calvocoressi discusses Cooper's collection, as he devoted himself to Braque, Gris, Léger and – of course – Picasso.

Art in a State of Siege
Joseph Koerner
(Princeton University Press)

What do Hieronymus Bosch's *Garden of Earthly Delights*, Max Beckmann's self-portrait of 1927 and an animation by William Kentridge have in common? For Koerner, these three striking images, separated by six centuries, are all examples of art that harnesses the power of creativity to confront an existential threat. That threat might be religious strife, fascism or apartheid, but Koerner makes the compelling case for a thread that connects all three.


Joseph Leo Koerner
Art in a State of Siege

DIGITAL INNOVATION OF THE YEAR

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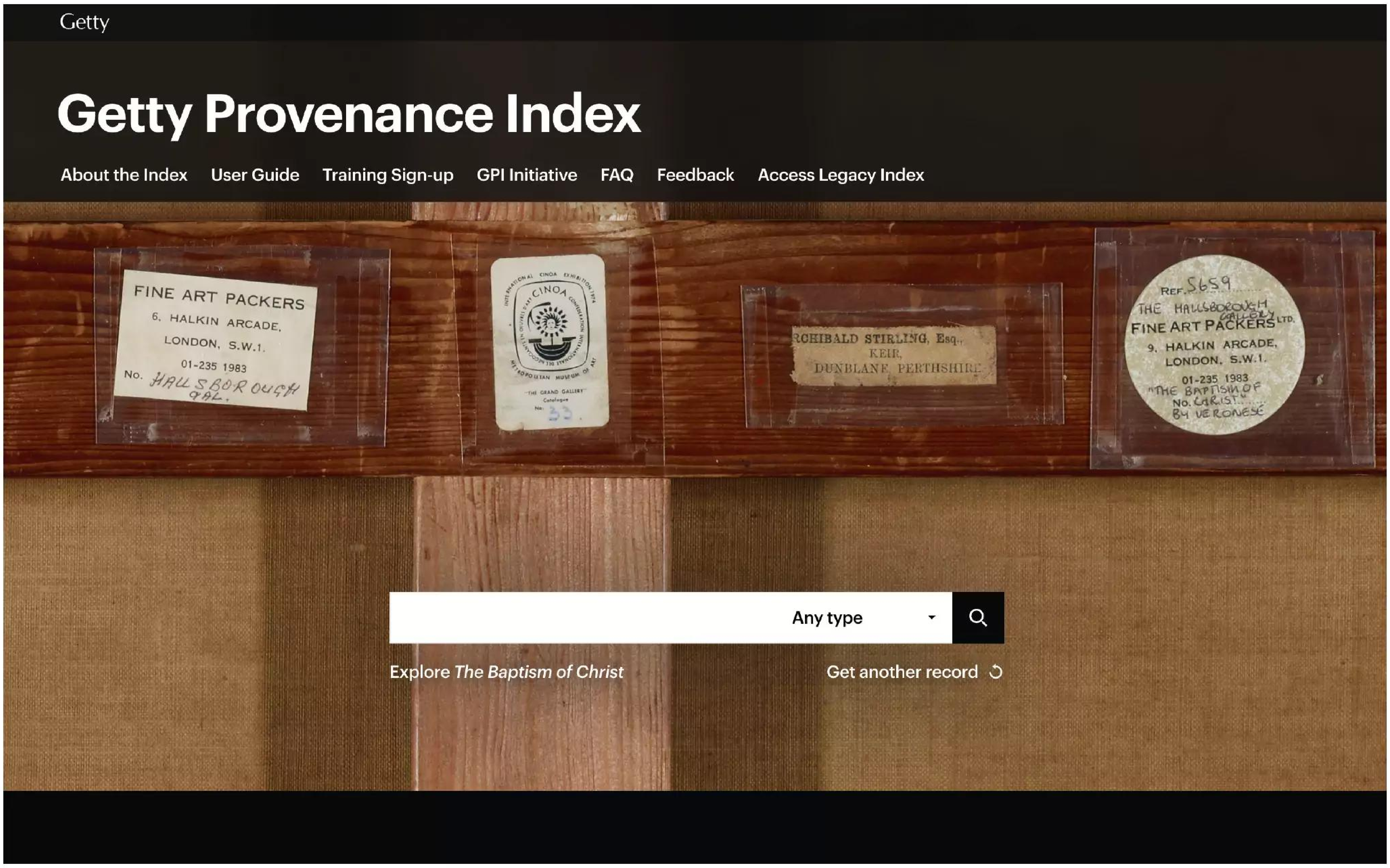


The landing page of the Getty Provenance Index, which relaunched in May 2025

The Getty Provenance Index (GPI) was launched in the 1980s and by the turn of the millennium had become an indispensable resource for curators and researchers. Drawing on a vast pool of archival material, including dealer stock books dating back to the 16th century, this searchable database made a bewildering array of information legible, allowing anyone to survey the ownership history of thousands of artworks stretching back to the Renaissance. In May this year the Getty Research Institute launched a radically reconfigured version – though those who miss the GPI's previous version can still use it on the Getty's website – making use of the enormous amounts of metadata buried in the existing records to help users map connections between works, and between buyers and sellers, in more detail than ever before.

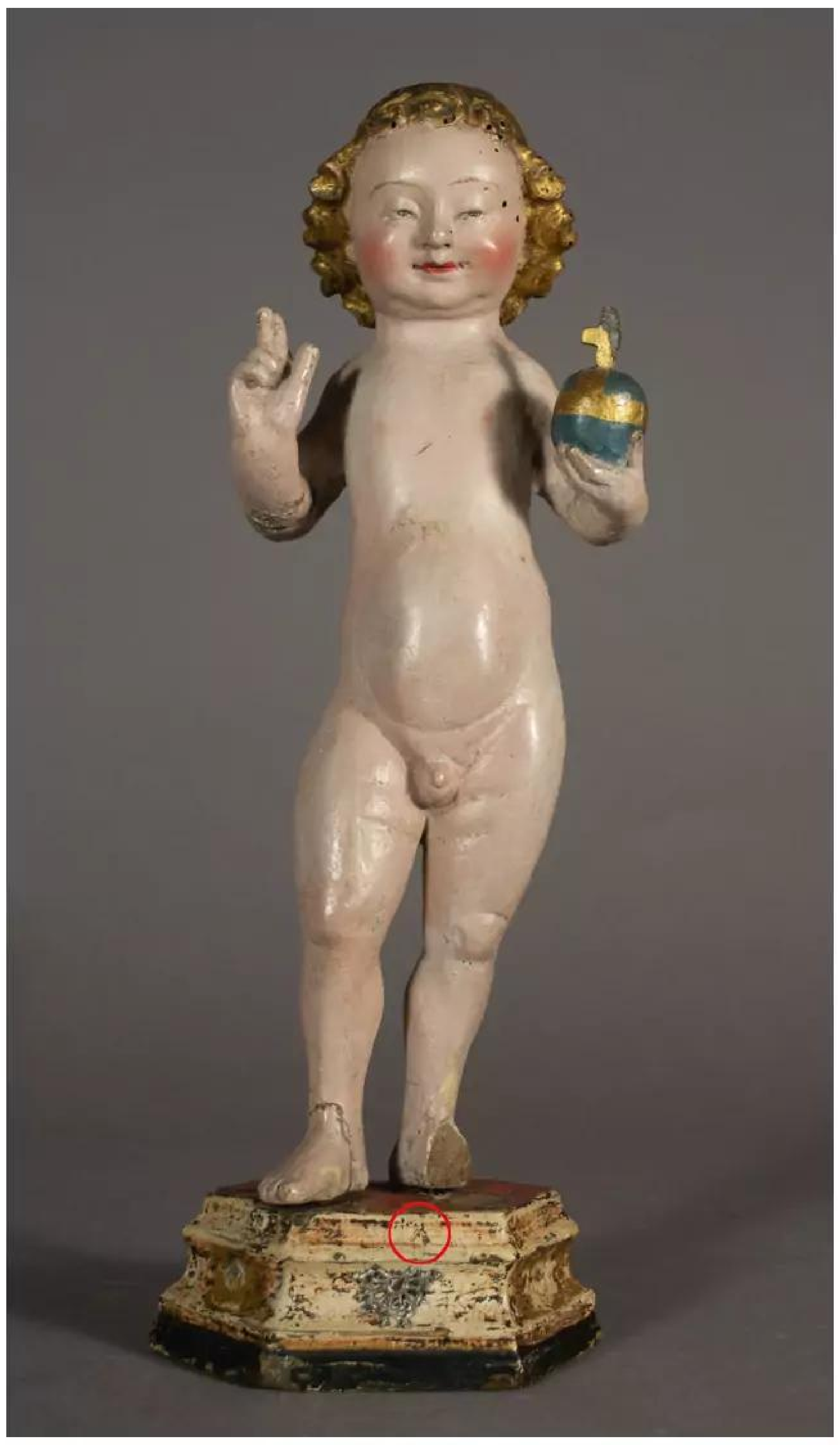
Ten years in the making, the new database – which is especially strong on records relating to European and American paintings – comes at a time when provenance is an increasingly vexed question for museums, dealers and auction houses. The more ownership histories are made available, the better it is for the art world as a whole. Sandra van Ginhoven and Lily Pregill, who jointly led the project, made sure that institutions wanting to share provenance information with the Getty could do so as seamlessly as possible: they adopted Linked Open Data as the new standard for information.

Getting a better sense of the nexus of relationships surrounding certain artworks can help tell art-historical stories on a grand scale – such as how the auction market emerged in Paris and London – as well as affording more intimate insights, for example, into how artworks were distributed within households.

'All this information can tell bigger stories about how artworks have moved over time,' says van Ginhoven. 'Who are the agents who have fostered this circulation and developed the structures that facilitate it? Our goal is to activate this data in new ways and at scale, allowing for patterns to emerge across the dataset – while making sure people can still find the data they need.'

Arjun Sajip, web editor of Apollo.

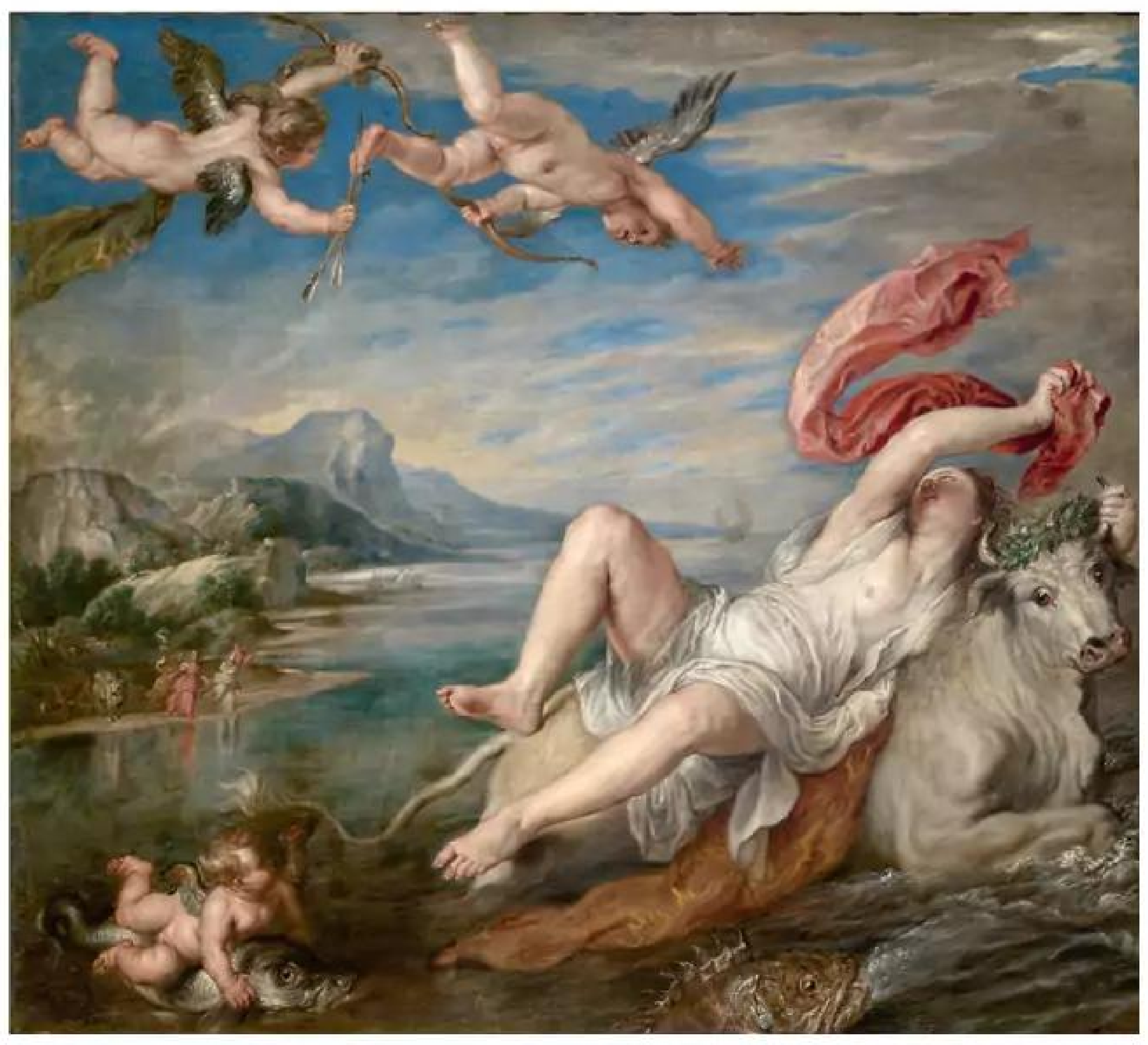
SHORTLIST



Marks on Art

research.rkd.nl

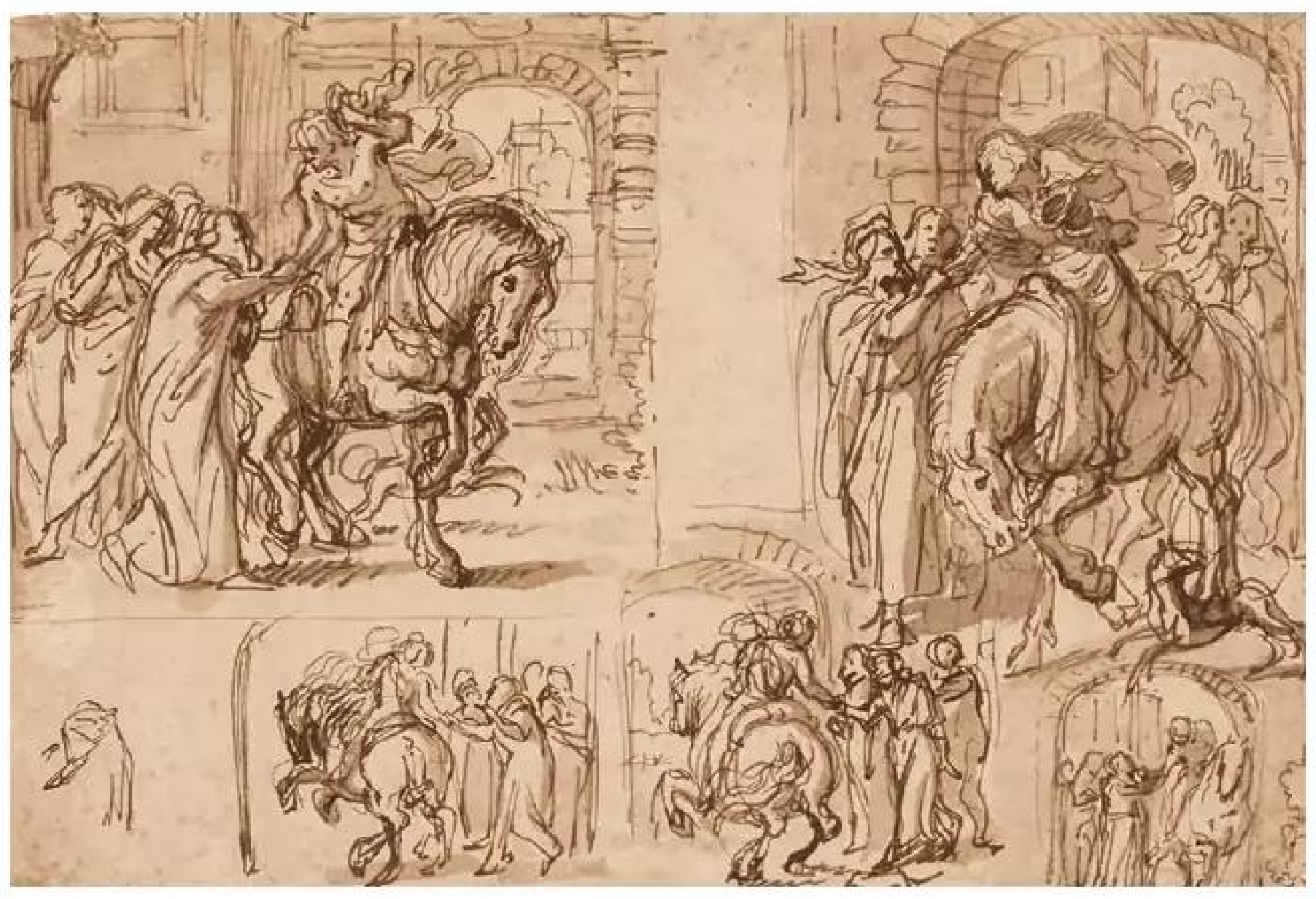
RKD – Netherlands Institute for Art History has launched an online database of some 1,500 marks on late medieval sculptures and 16th- and 17th-century paintings from the Netherlands, complete with pictures and detailed descriptions. The marks including positioning marks, which indicate how certain groups of statues were to be arranged. This exceptional resource, which will keep being updated with new records, helps art historians to trace a wide range of works back to specific periods, makers and workshops.



Aracne

www.museodelprado.es

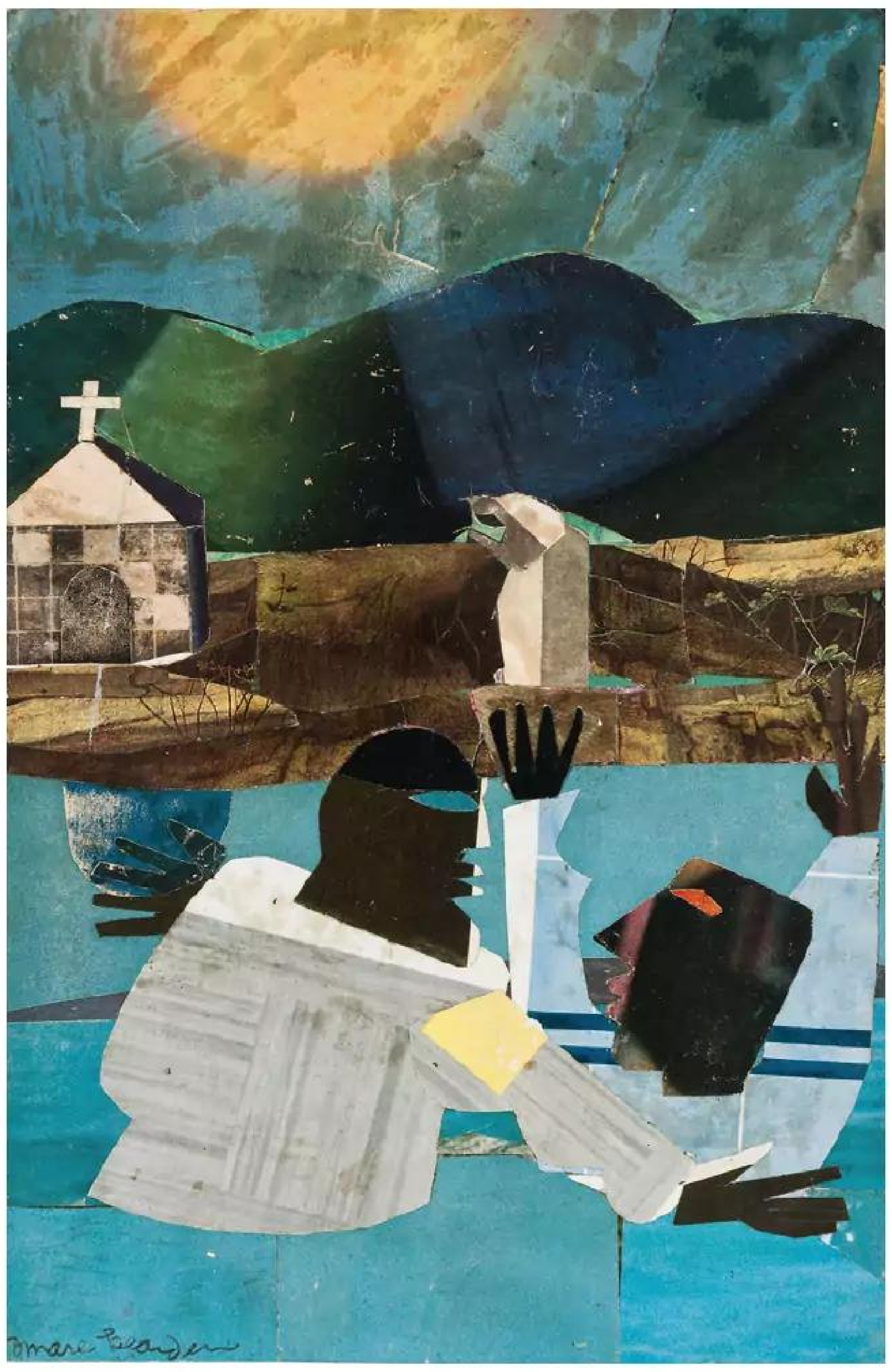
With this canvas-analysis software – now downloadable from the Prado's website for free – users can analyse paintings from high-resolution photographs or X-rays. The software has helped the Prado date and attribute several works, for example establishing that Rubens painted his copy of Titian's *The Rape of Europa* in Madrid in 1628–29, rather than on his return to Antwerp. It was also crucial in reattributing a painting thought to be by Francisco Rizi to Francisco Herrera the Younger.



Trois Crayons Museum Forum

troiscrayonsforum.org

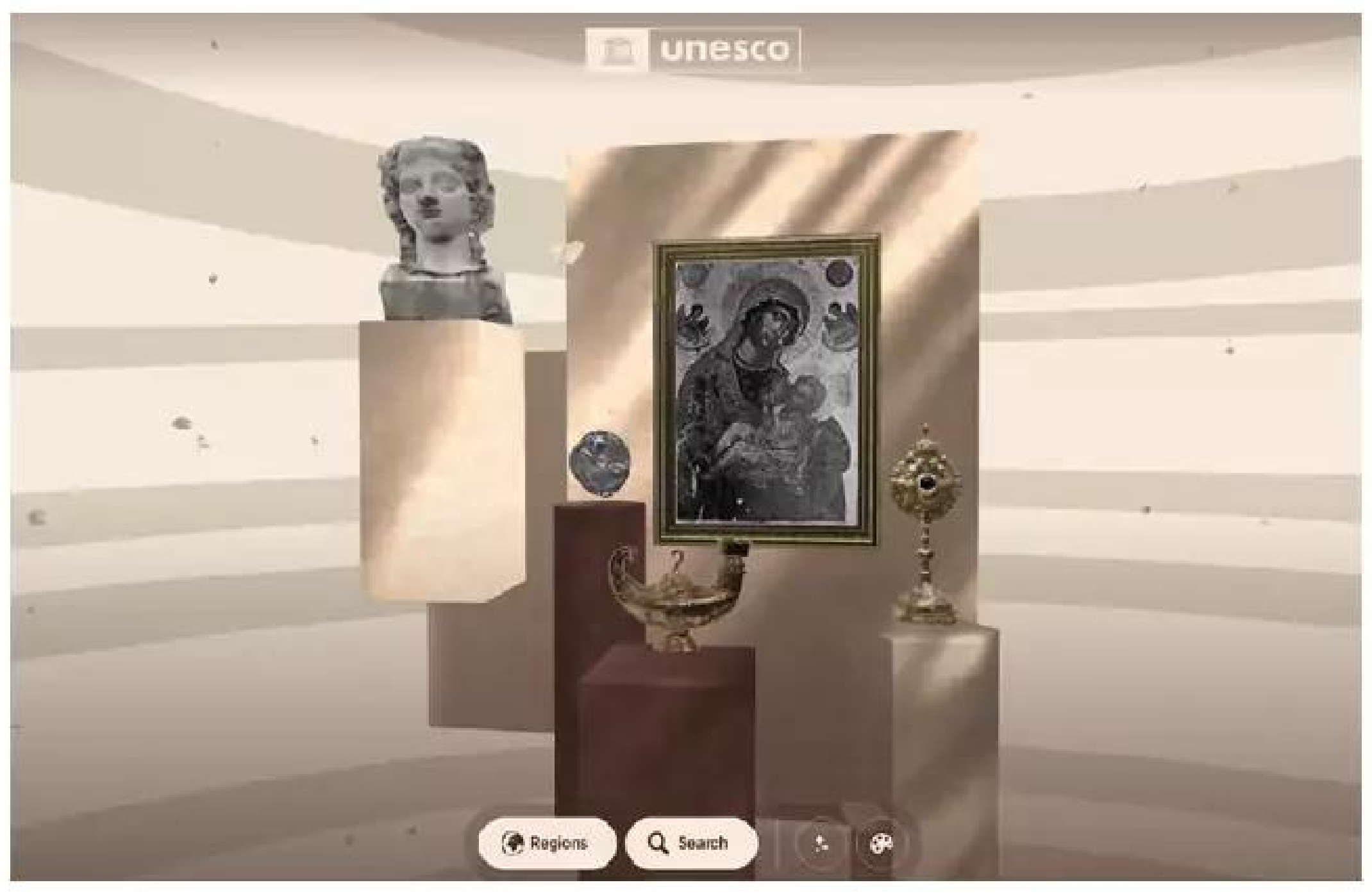
This platform for discussing and identifying pre-modern drawings in public collections allows curators, researchers and anyone registered as one of Trois Crayons's museum partners to share 'problem' drawings and pick their peers' brains for answers to questions about dating, provenance, attribution and more. Since it was launched in July, institutions including the Met, the Courtauld, the Ashmolean and Princeton University Art Museum have used it, with commenters offering useful pointers.



Romare Bearden Catalogue Raisonné Project

digitalprojects.wpi.art

Over his career, Romare Bearden produced some 3,000 works, from collages to prints. This year the Wildenstein Plattner Institute, in collaboration with the Romare Bearden Foundation, released online the first part of a catalogue raisonné, comprising more than 200 works from 1964–69, as well as papers and archive materials. Some 700 previously unknown works have also been found.



UNESCO Virtual Museum of Stolen Cultural Objects

museum.unesco.org

The Virtual Museum, designed by architect Francis Kéré to convey what it's like to walk through a museum, presents thousands of items from UNESCO's database of looted artefacts in 3D. Clicking on an artefact takes the user to information about the object, including when and where it was created and its cultural importance. The museum also funds real-world projects, such as the training of heritage workers.

Photo: © RKD – Nederlands Instituut voor Kunstgeschiedenis / Photo: © Museo Nacional del Prado / Courtesy Michael Rosenfeld Gallery LLC, New York; © Romare Bearden Foundation/licensed by VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

ACQUISITION OF THE YEAR

The Crucifixion with the Virgin, Saint John the Evangelist and the Magdalen, early 1420s, Fra Angelico

Ashmolean Museum, Oxford

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Great works of art have an inevitability of their own,' wrote Francis Russell, then head of the Old Masters department at Christie's, nearly 30 years ago in the *Burlington Magazine*. The occasion was his publication of a hitherto unknown devotional panel of the Crucifixion in an English private collection with an emphatic new attribution to the Florentine friar artist, Fra or Beato Angelico (active 1417–55). 'It seems astonishing,' Russell continued, 'that Fra Angelico's name has not previously been invoked in connection with [this panel].' His essay more than remedied the oversight; since then the picture's status as one of the artist's pivotal early works has never been questioned.

There was nothing inevitable, however, about how the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford secured the work for the public at the close of last year. Thought to have been in England from the early 19th century, the painting finally surfaced at Christie's on 6 July 2023, selling for over £5 million to an overseas buyer. Acting on expert advice, the government issued a temporary export bar and invited domestic buyers to match the sale price. The window of opportunity was, however, forbiddingly narrow: the painting's export would be deferred for only nine months.

Xa Sturgis and Jennifer Sliwka – Director of the Ashmolean and Keeper of the Museum's Western Art Department respectively – deserve enormous credit for galvanising a fundraising campaign that just reached its formidable target in time. In November 2024 the museum unveiled its coup, having purchased the painting for £4.5 million by private agreement. Raising such a sum for an Italian gold ground is a truly exceptional achievement.

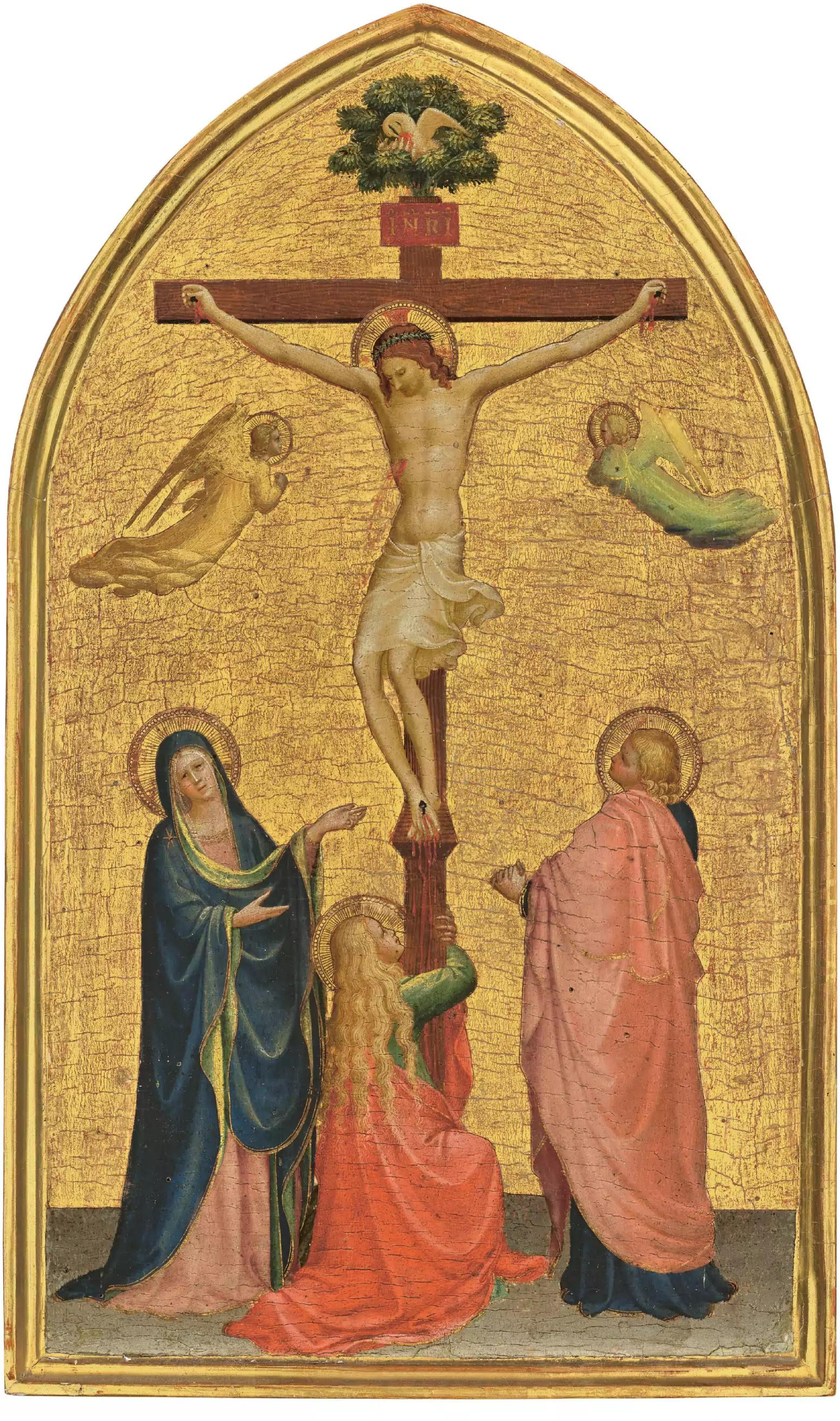
At the time of writing, the *Crucifixion* is not in Oxford but in Florence, taking its place in a blockbuster exhibition dedicated to Fra Angelico split between San Marco and the Palazzo Strozzi. The Ashmolean's generous loan, mere months after the acquisition, allows the painting to be critically considered alongside the artist's other early works, as well as those by his contemporaries whose influence can be detected in the Oxford panel.

Seeing the *Crucifixion* in Florence alongside so many comparable examples of the same period underlines both its quality and significance. Here we sense Fra Angelico moving between his training with Lorenzo Monaco and the ferment of innovation that had fully enveloped the visual arts in Florence by the mid 1420s. The Pelican-in-her-Piety at the summit of the cross gestures back to Monaco and older traditions of Crucifixion imagery, but elsewhere in the painting Angelico shows his awareness of Lorenzo Ghiberti, Masaccio and – perhaps most strongly – Gentile da Fabriano. This seems to be Fra Angelico's earliest surviving depiction of the Crucifixion, a subject he was to paint repeatedly during his career. It is surely earlier than his frescoed Crucifix at San Domenico, Fiesole (recently restored), where Christ's dipped head reflects Masaccio's *Crucifixion* from the Pisa polyptych of 1426.

Writing in the exhibition catalogue, Angelo Tartuferi decisively rejects Laurence Kanter's earlier proposal that the Ashmolean *Crucifixion* formed a triptych with two much-altered panels each depicting a pair of saints in a private collection (which are also displayed in Florence, allowing visitors to make their own comparisons). Pending future technical analysis, it seems most likely that Angelico painted the panel as we see it now, an isolated image to absorb the viewer's devotions.

The picture will remain in excellent company once it is back in Oxford, alongside works by Paolo Uccello and Bicci di Lorenzo. On its return, the *Crucifixion* will be the centrepiece of Sliwka's rehang of the Ashmolean's Renaissance paintings, substantiating Oxford's ambition to be a 'world-leading centre for the study of Italian Renaissance art'. Sliwka's time at the Ashmolean has been relatively brief – she arrived in 2023 and is now moving to Vienna as Director of the Picture Gallery at the Kunsthistorisches Museum – but she leaves an impressive legacy behind in Oxford.

Donal Cooper, professor of Italian and Mediterranean art at the University of Cambridge.



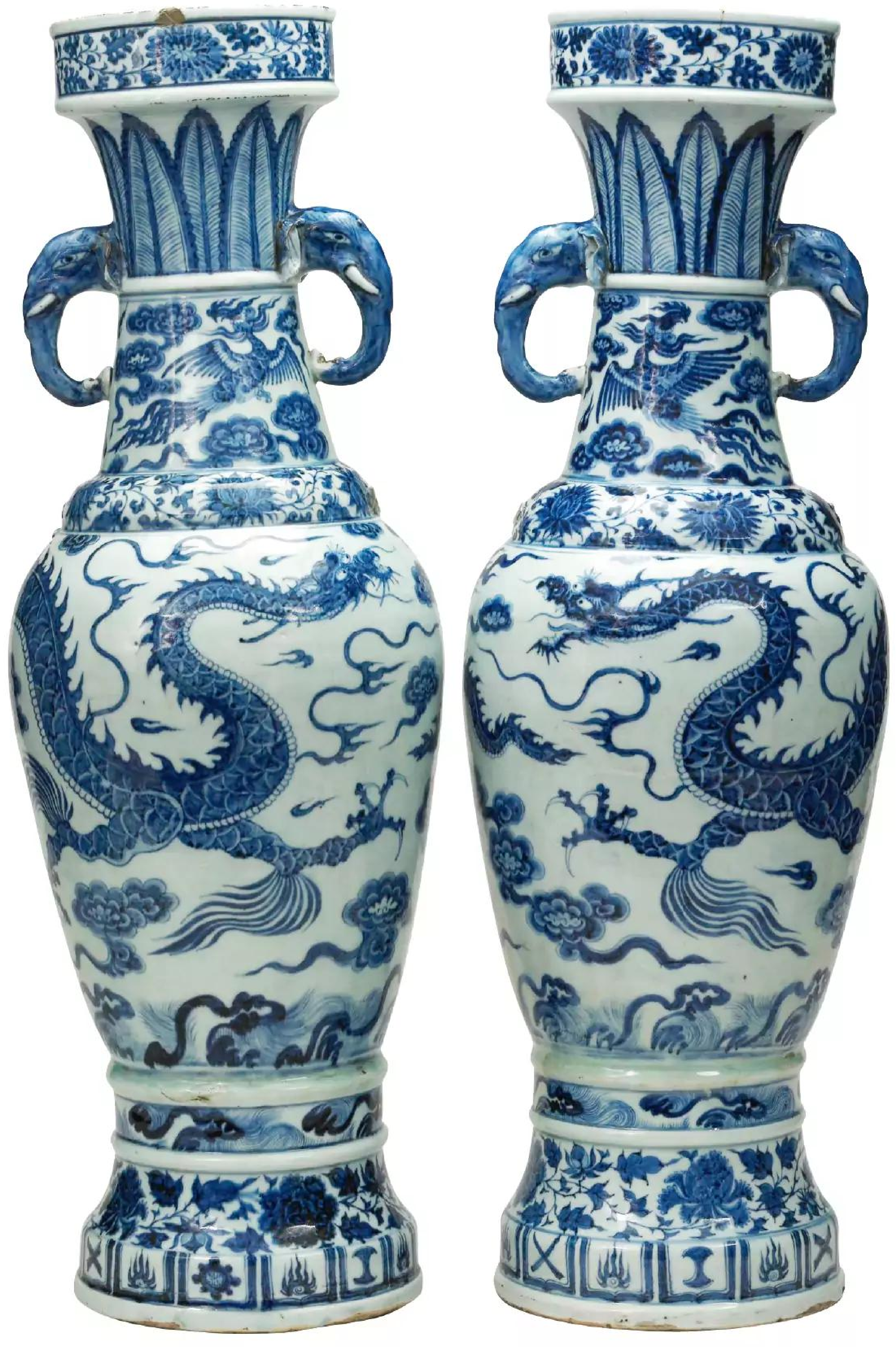
The Crucifixion with the Virgin, Saint John the Evangelist and the Magdalen, early 1420s, Fra Angelico (active 1417–1455), tempera on panel, 59.7 × 34.2cm. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. Purchased with donations from the Ashmolean's Chairman, The Lord Lupton CBE, and David and Molly Lowell Borthwick; major grants from the National Heritage Memorial Fund, Art Fund, and The Headley Trust; more than 50 major donors; and public appeal

Photo: © 2023 Christie's Images

SHORTLIST

Apollo's list of the stand-out acquisitions made over the past year shows that, despite the challenges faced by many museums, their collections remain sites of innovation and interest. There have been valuable groups of works acquired – the Horvitz collection to the Art Institute of Chicago, the 123 works by Cy Twombly to the Menil Collection and the British Museum's acquisition, after 16 years on loan to the institution, of Sir Percival David's collection of Chinese ceramics – are exemplary examples. But this list also recognises that a single work – the last remaining marble by Giambologna in private hands for the Cleveland Museum of Art, for instance, or the first work by Hew Locke for the National Portrait Gallery – can be just as transformative for museums as huge gifts.

It is notable that classical antiquities feature less and less – a sign, perhaps, of increasing concerns around provenance. It is cheering to see so many museums trying to broaden representation, particularly when it comes to Old Masters. Artists such as Tilman Riemenschneider, Maarten van Heemskerck and Luisa Roldán are hardly household names but are being increasingly integrated into the collections of major institutions, while the National Gallery's acquisition of an anonymous 16th-century altarpiece demonstrates that museums still have faith in the value of research – and in monster-headed dogs.



△ BRITISH MUSEUM, LONDON

1,700 Chinese ceramics from the Sir Percival David Foundation

Pictured: The David Vases, 1351, Yuan dynasty, Jiangxi, porcelain, ht 63.8cm

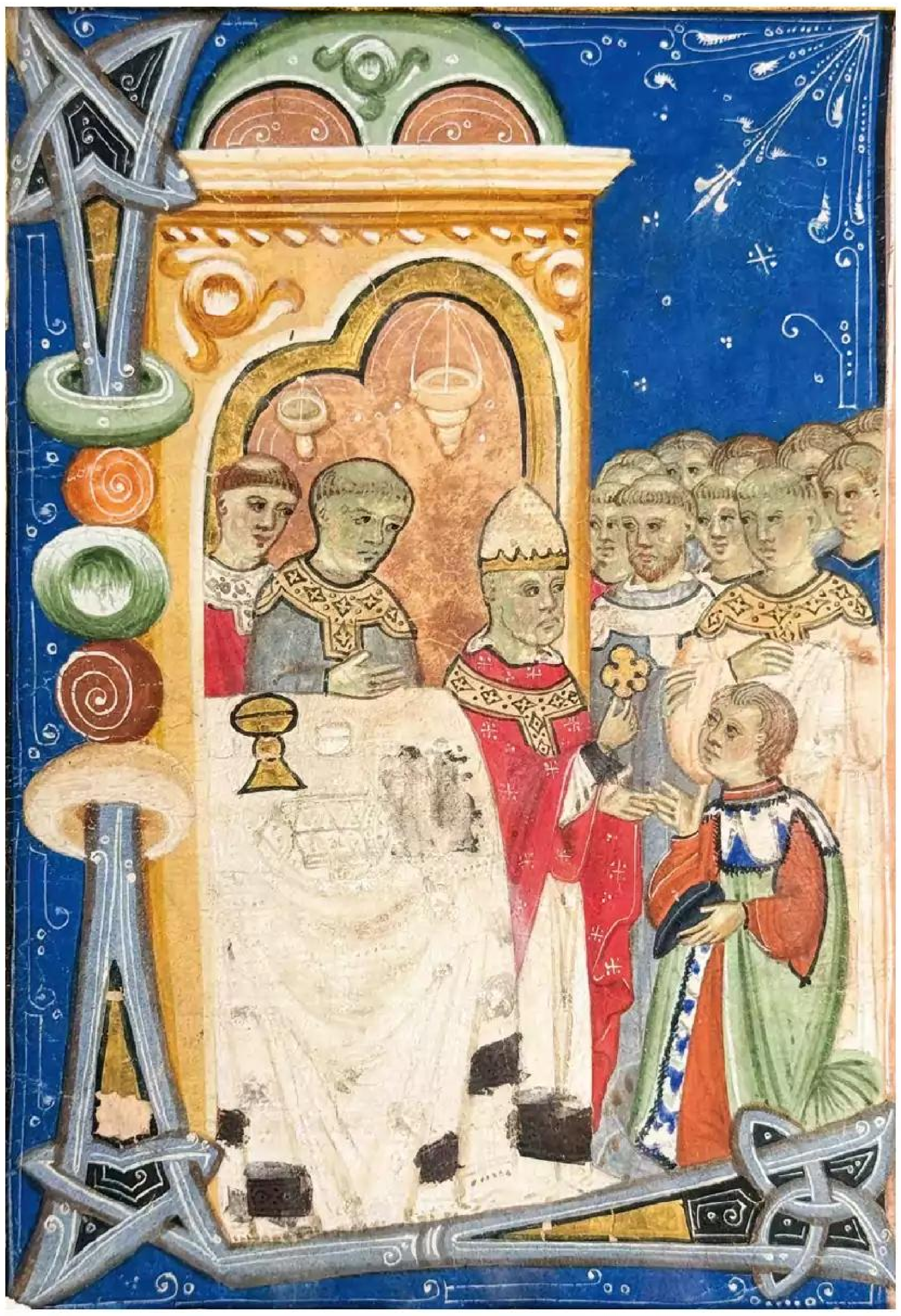
Gift of the Sir Percival David Foundation

▽ MUSÉE DE CLUNY, PARIS

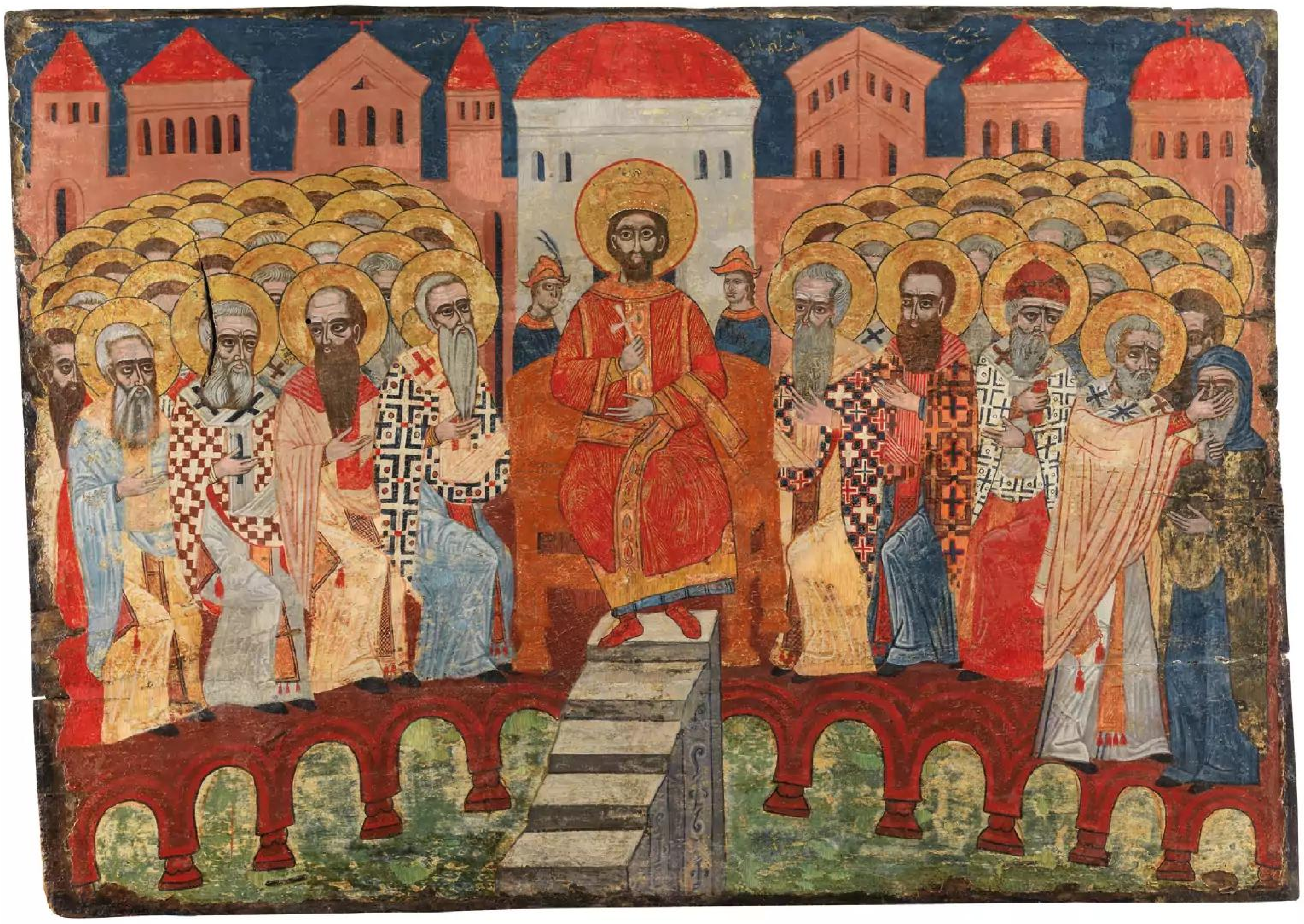
Miniature from an Antiphonary or Gradual depicting a pope giving a golden rose to an unknown layman, 1275–1300, Rome or Bologna

Illumination on parchment, 17.5 × 13cm

Purchased with funds provided by the Society of Friends of the Museum, an individual donor and the Ministry of Culture



British Museum photo: © The Trustees of the British Museum



△ MUSÉE DU LOUVRE, PARIS

Religious icons from the Abou Adal collection

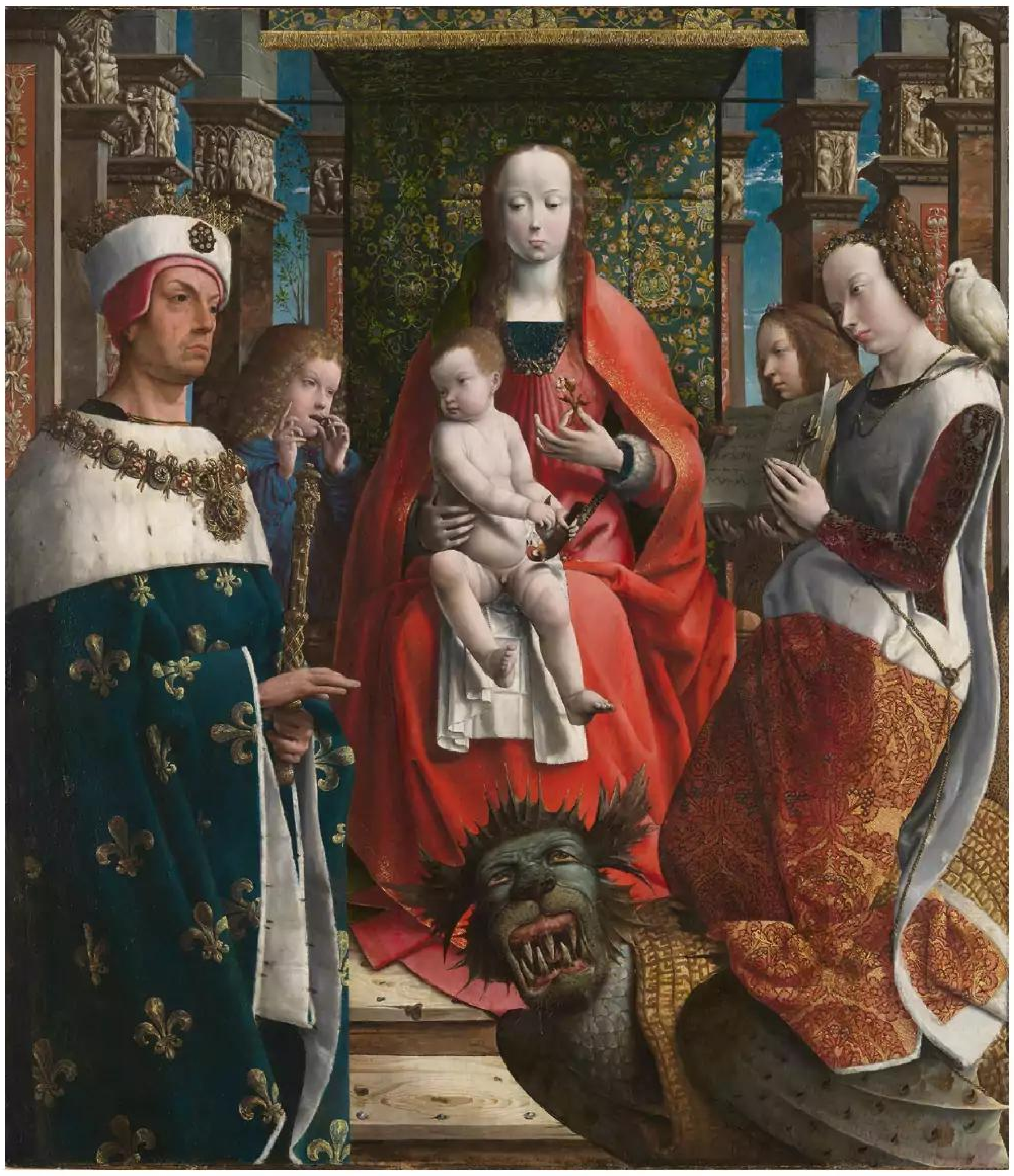
Pictured: *The Council of Nicaea*, *c.* 1637, artist unknown, tempera on wood, gold, 85×120cm

△ BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE DE FRANCE, PARIS

Psalter of David, 13th century, Constantinople

Ink and gold on vellum

Purchased with museum funds

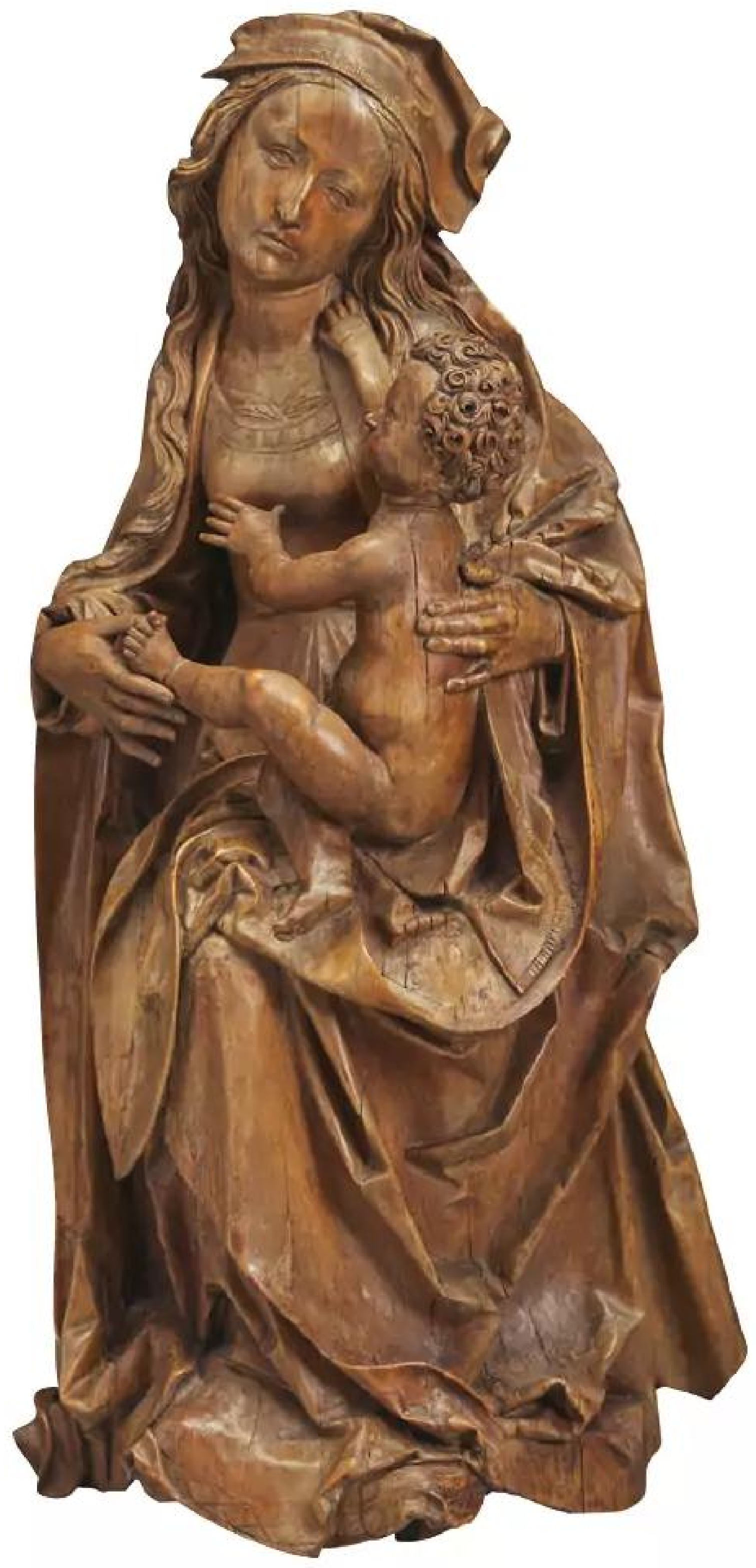


△ NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON

***The Virgin and Child with Saints Louis and Margaret*, *c.* 1510, artist unknown, Netherlands or France**

Oil on wood, 122.2×105.8cm

Purchased with the support of the American Friends of the National Gallery

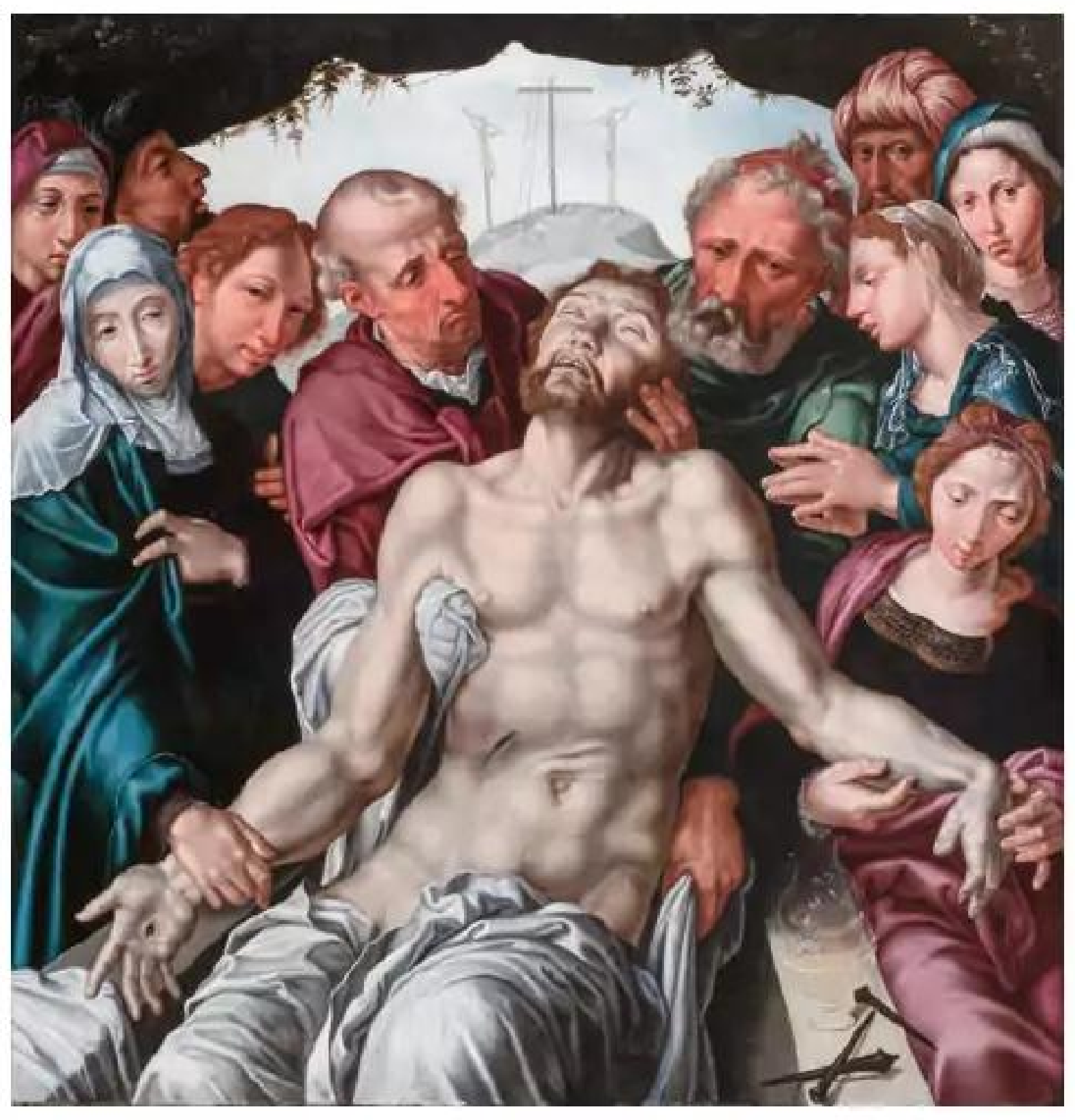


△ YALE UNIVERSITY ART GALLERY, NEW HAVEN

***Virgin and Child Enthroned*, *c.* 1500–05, Tilman Riemenschneider (*c.* 1460–1531)**

Limewood with traces of polychromy, 91.5×45×30cm

Purchased with funds from the Maitland F. Griggs, B.A. 1896, Fund and Leonard C. Hanna, Jr., Class of 1913, Fund



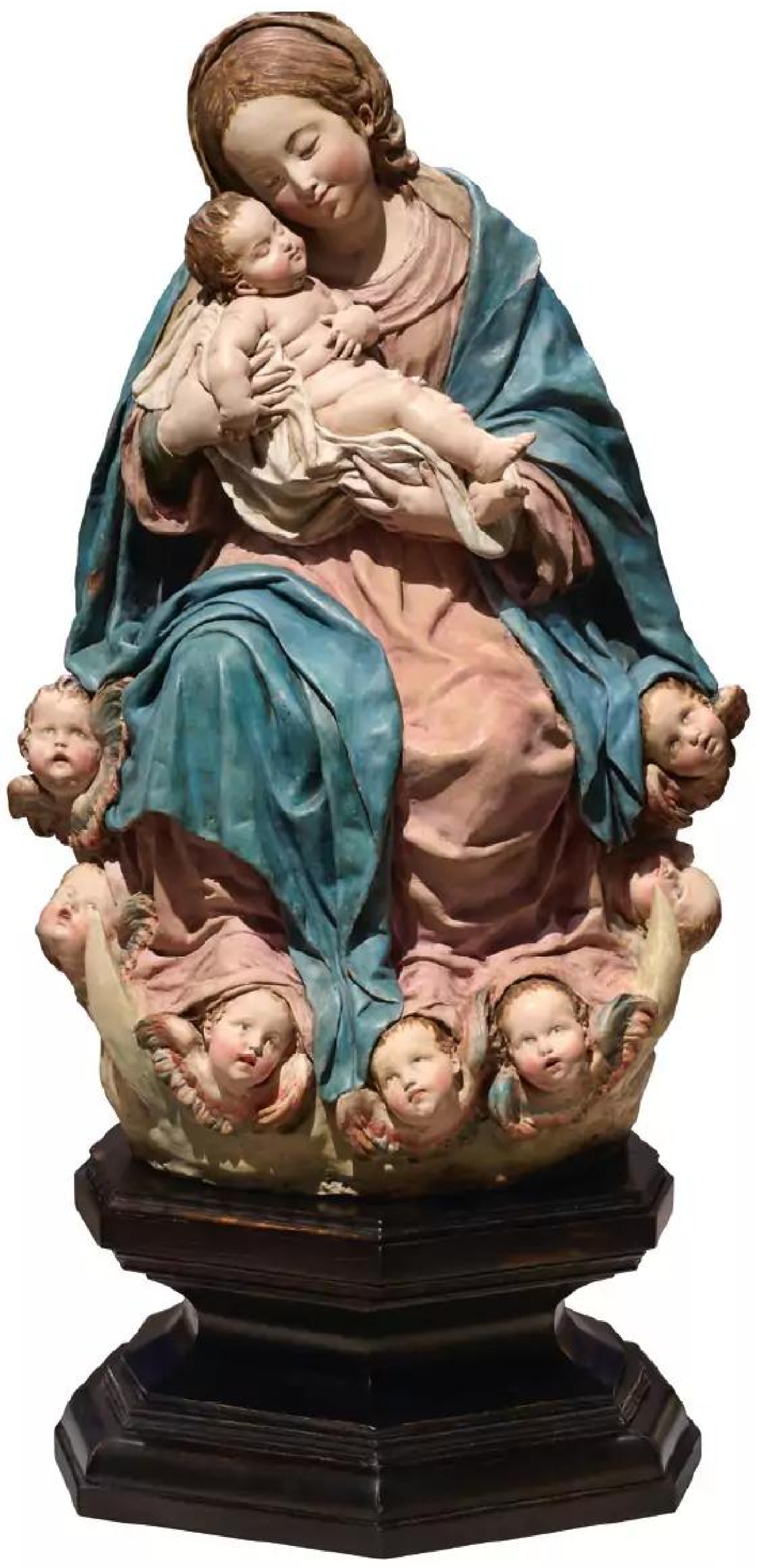
△ WORCESTER ART MUSEUM

***The Entombment*, *c.* 1545, Maarten van Heemskerck (1498–1574)**

Oil on panel, 79.5×83.5cm

Purchased with funds provided by the Stoddard Acquisition Fund

Louvre photo: Julien Vidal; © Musée du Louvre, Dist. GrandPalaisRMN / BnF photo: Elie Ludwig/BnF / Worcester photo: Caretto & Occhinegro

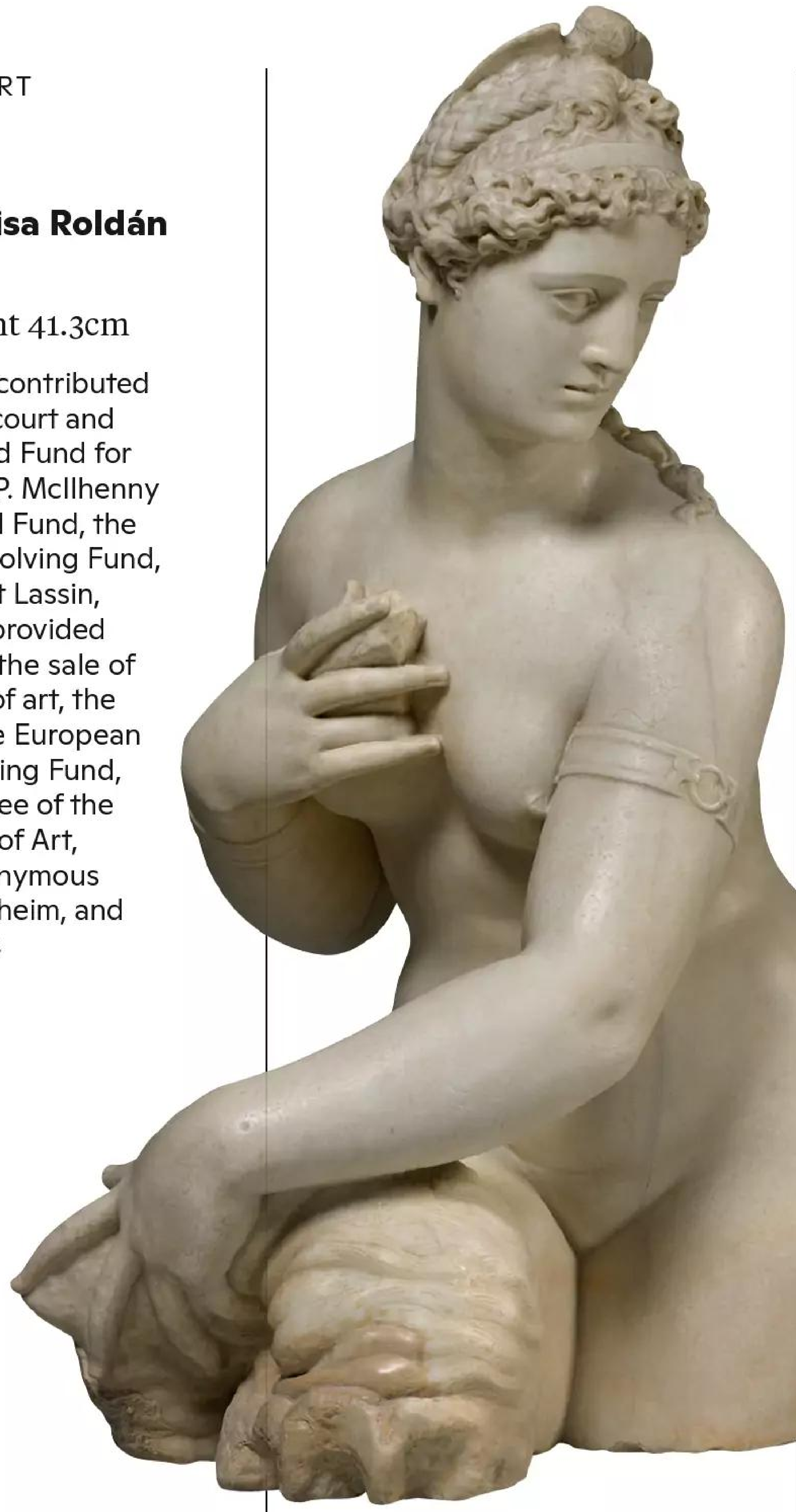


◁ PHILADELPHIA ART MUSEUM

***Virgin and Child*, c. 1690–1706, Luisa Roldán (1652–1706)**

Painted terracotta, ht 41.3cm

Purchased with funds contributed by the Anne d'Harnoncourt and Joseph Rishel Endowed Fund for Excellence, the Henry P. McIlhenny Fund, the Fiske Kimball Fund, the European Painting Revolving Fund, and Ronald and Harriet Lassin, with additional funds provided by the proceeds from the sale of deaccessioned works of art, the Dean Walker Fund, the European Decorative Arts Revolving Fund, The Women's Committee of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Edith R. Dixon, an anonymous donor, Mrs. John A. Nyheim, and other generous donors



◁ CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART

***Fata Morgana*, c. 1572, Giambologna (1529–1608)**

Marble, 99 × 68cm

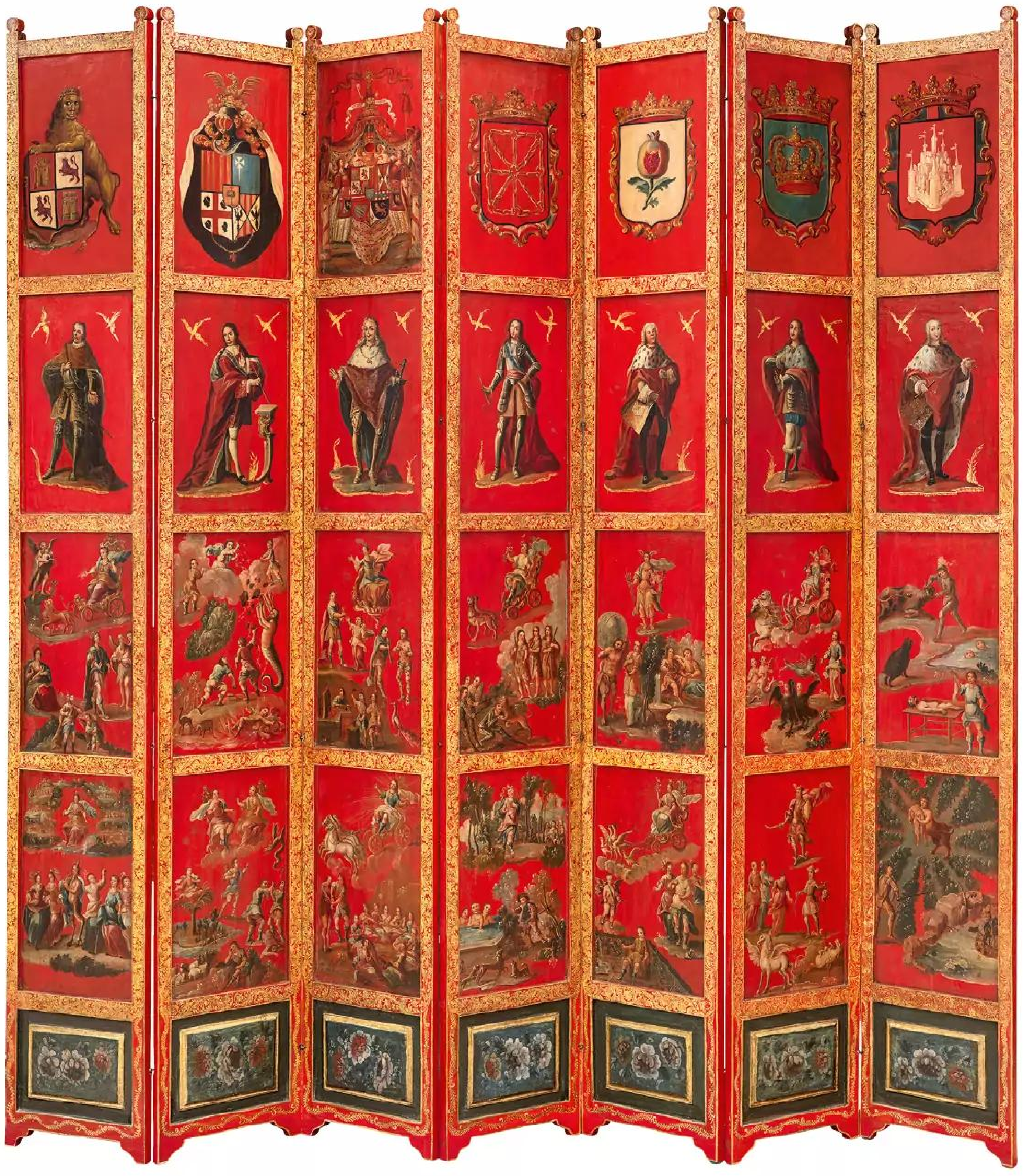
Purchased with funds from the Leonard C. Hanna Jr. Fund

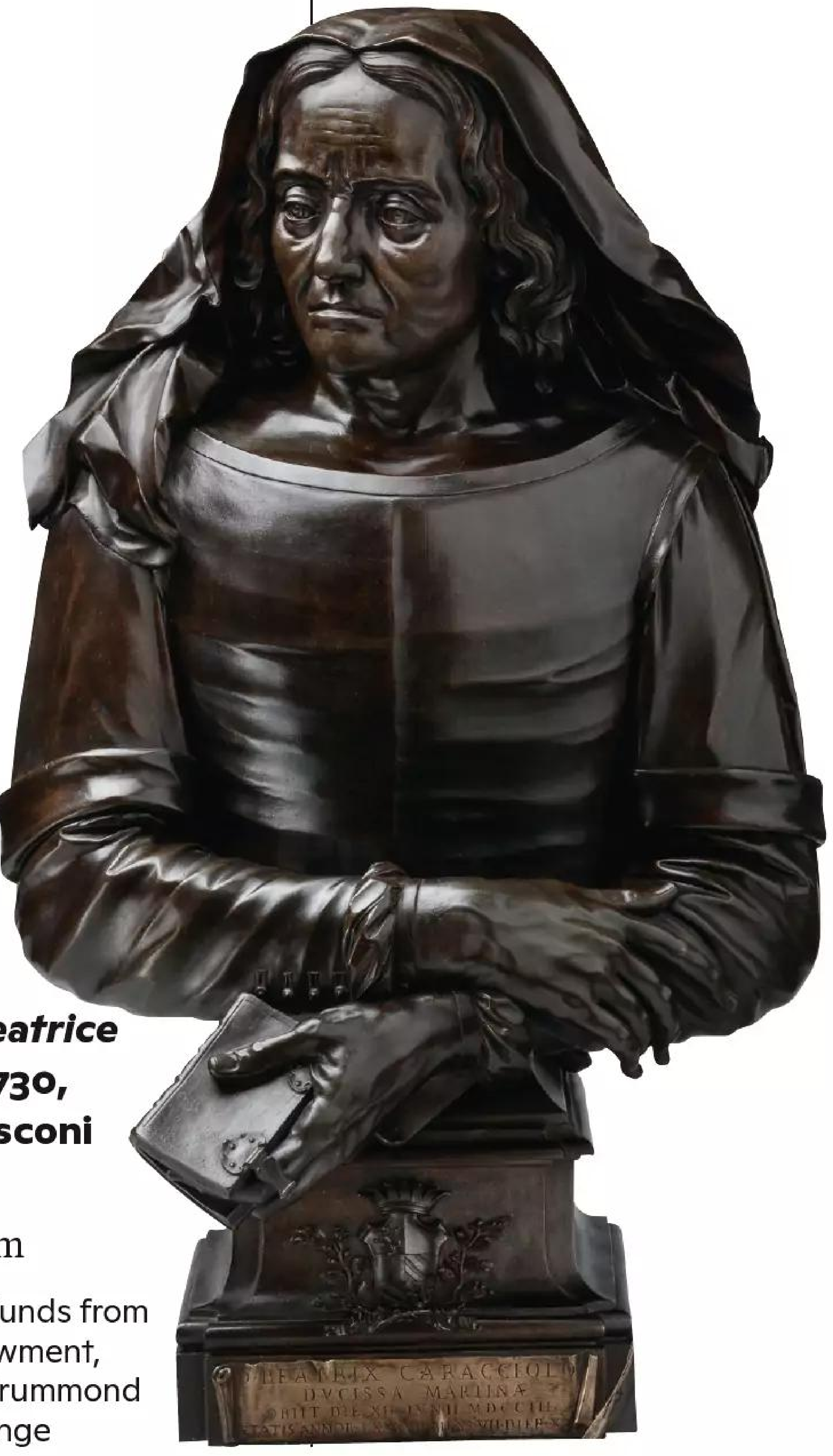
▽ MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, BOSTON

Biombo, c. 1750–60, Mexico

Oil on wood panels, 243.8 × 213.4cm (right screen pictured)

Purchased with funds from the Henry H. and Zoe Oliver Sherman Fund





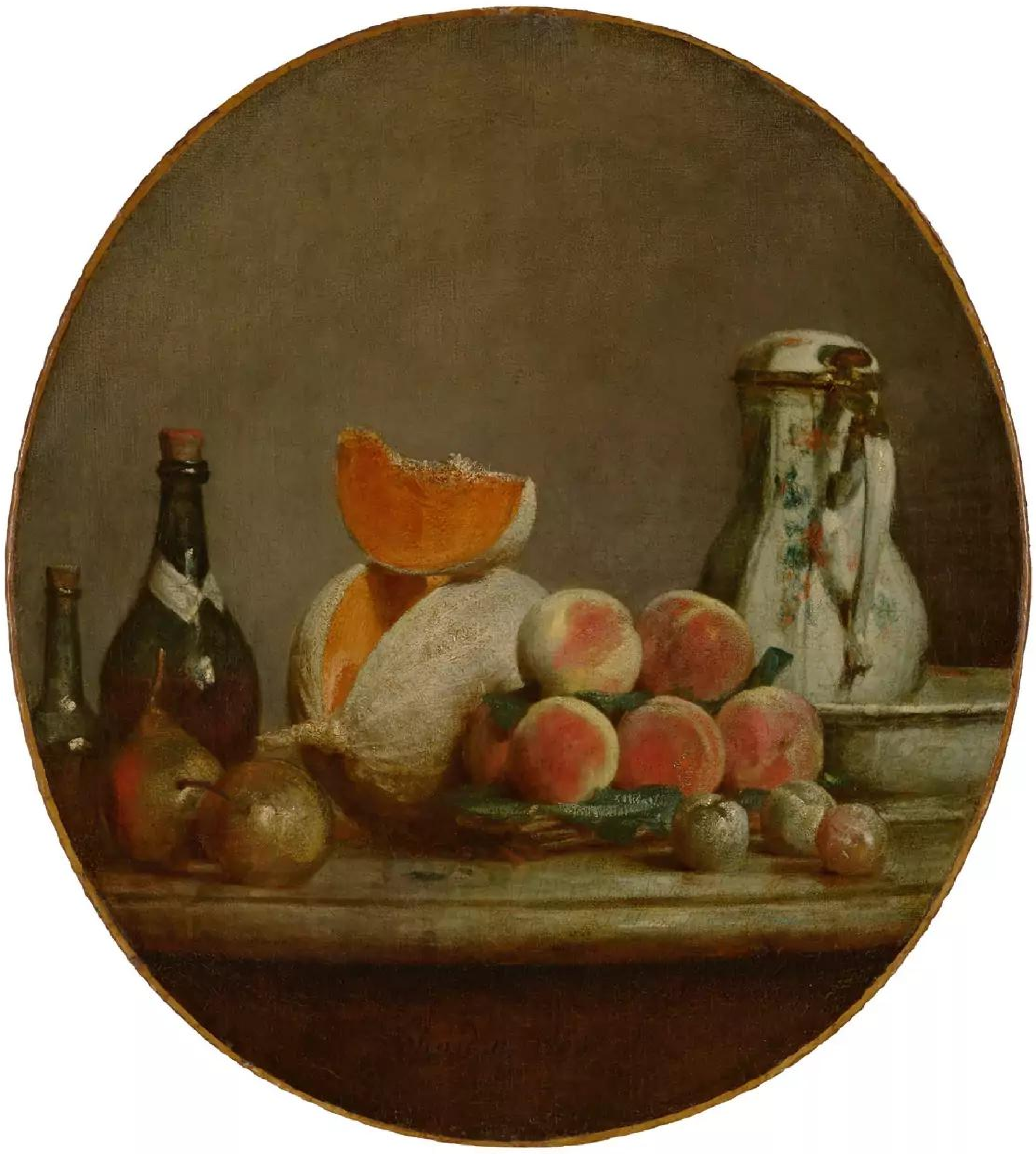
▷ TOLEDO MUSEUM OF ART

***Portrait of Beatrice Caracciolo*, 1730, Giuseppe Rusconi (1687–1737)**

Bronze, ht 84cm

Purchased with funds from the Libbey Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey, by exchange

Cleveland photo: courtesy Gary Kirchenbauer

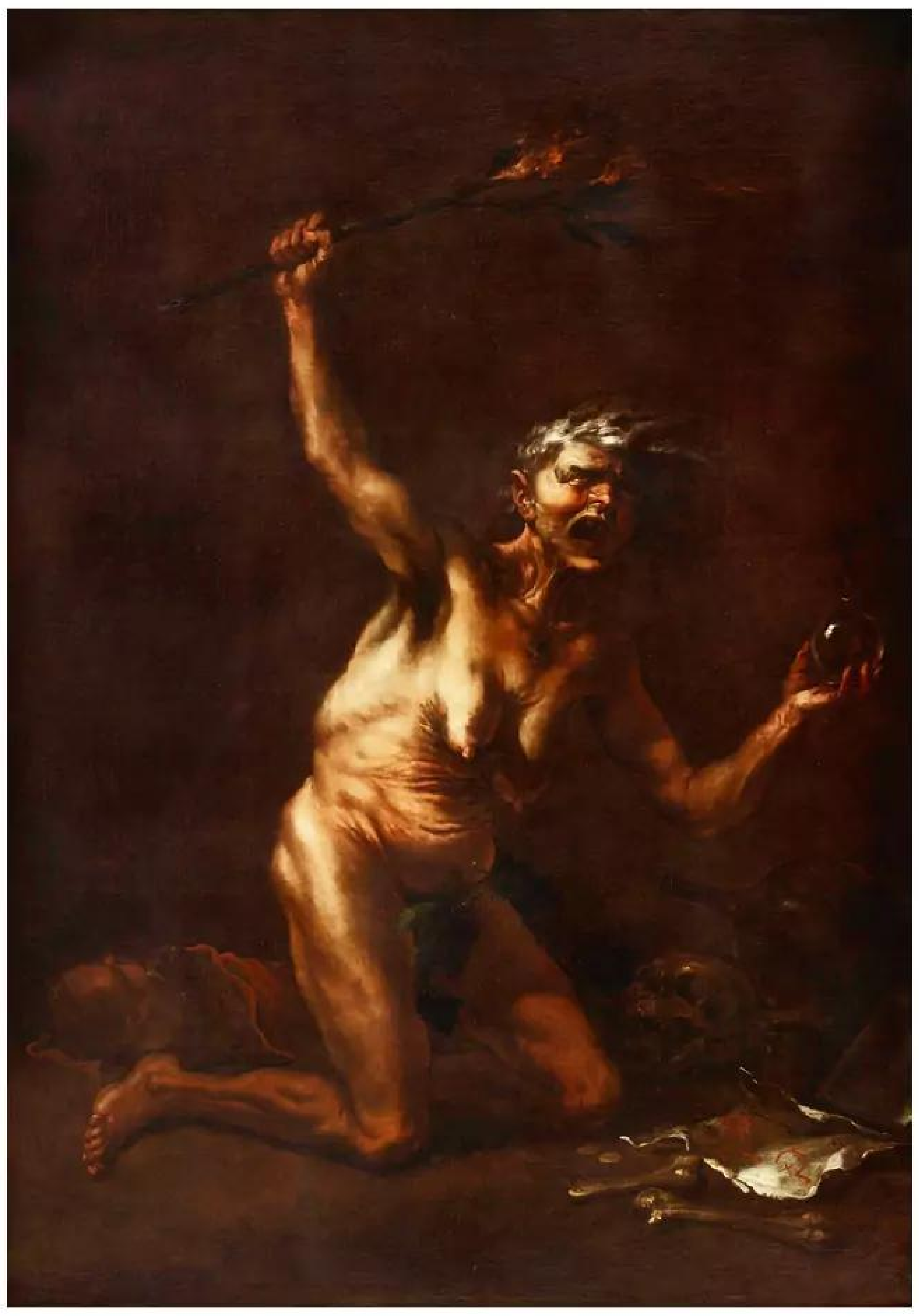


◁ KIMBELL ART MUSEUM, FORT WORTH

***The Cut Melon*, 1760, Jean Siméon Chardin (1699–1779)**

Oil on canvas, 57 × 51.5cm

Purchased by the Kimbell Art Foundation



△ GALLERIE DEGLI UFFIZI, FLORENCE

***The Witch*, c. 1647–50, Salvator Rosa (1615–73)**

Oil on canvas, 212 × 147cm

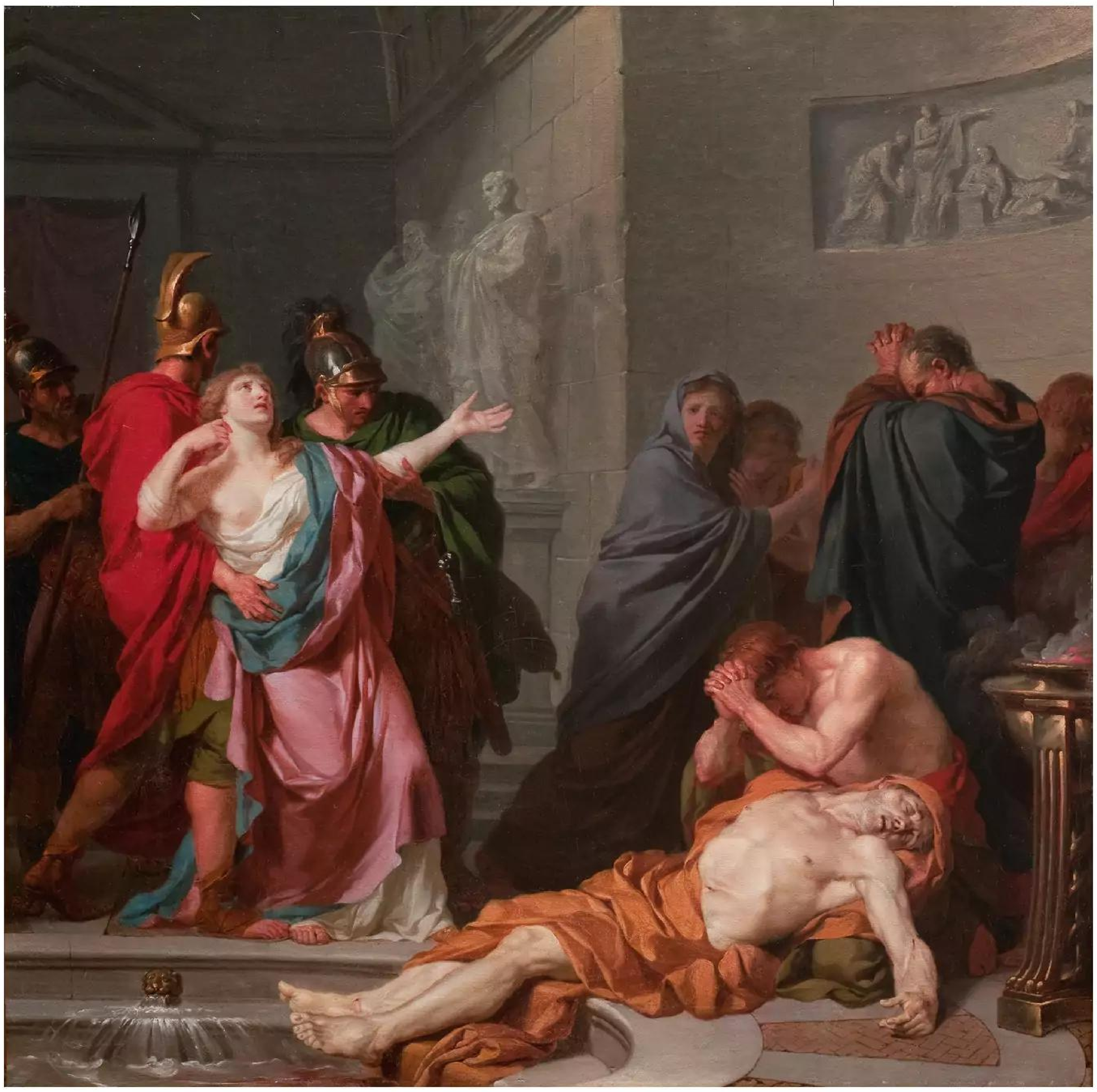
Purchased with museum funds

▽ ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO

More than 2,000 works of French art from the collection of Jeffrey and Carol Horvitz

Pictured: *Death of Seneca*, c. 1788, Jean-Charles-Niçaise Perrin (1754–1831), oil on canvas, 92 × 92 cm

Gift of Jeffrey and Carol Horvitz

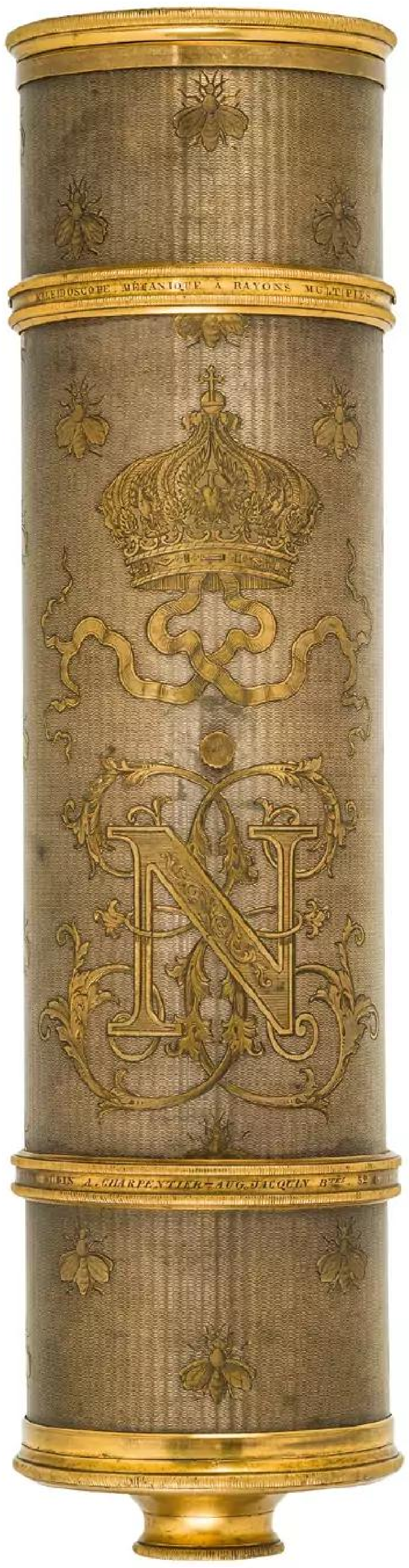


▷ CORNING MUSEUM OF GLASS, NEW YORK

Kaleidoscope, 1865–70, Maison Oudin A. Charpentier, France

Brass, gilding, glass, steel, metal, mirror, l. 28.4cm

Purchased with museum funds



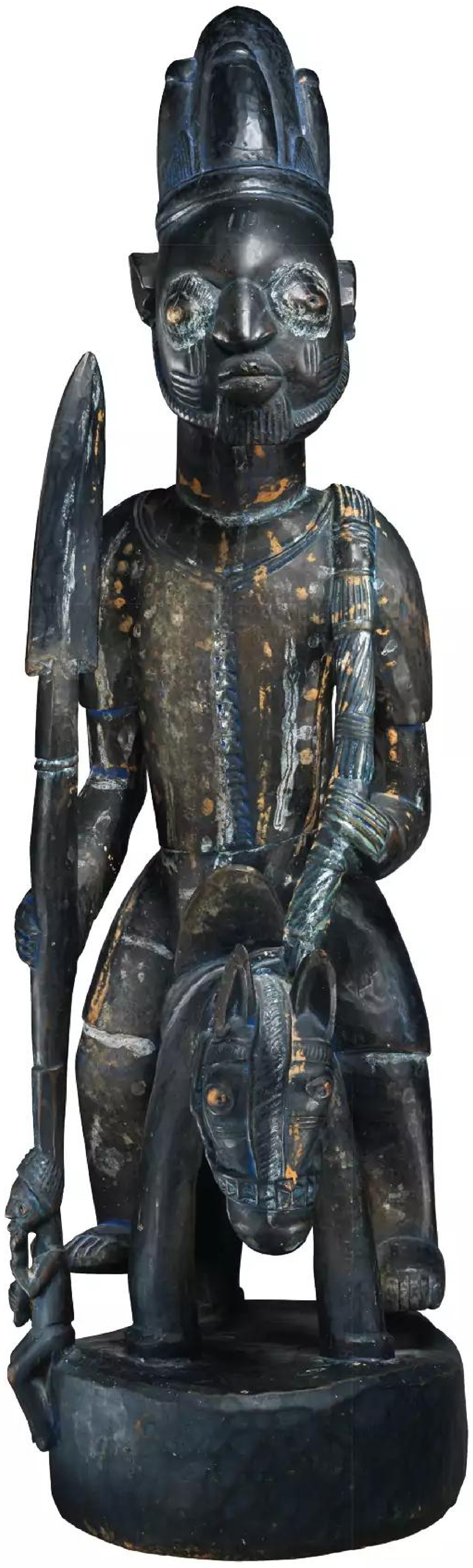
Uffizi photo: Courtesy Uffizi Galleries Press Office / Kimbell photo: Robert LaPrelle/Kimbell Art Museum

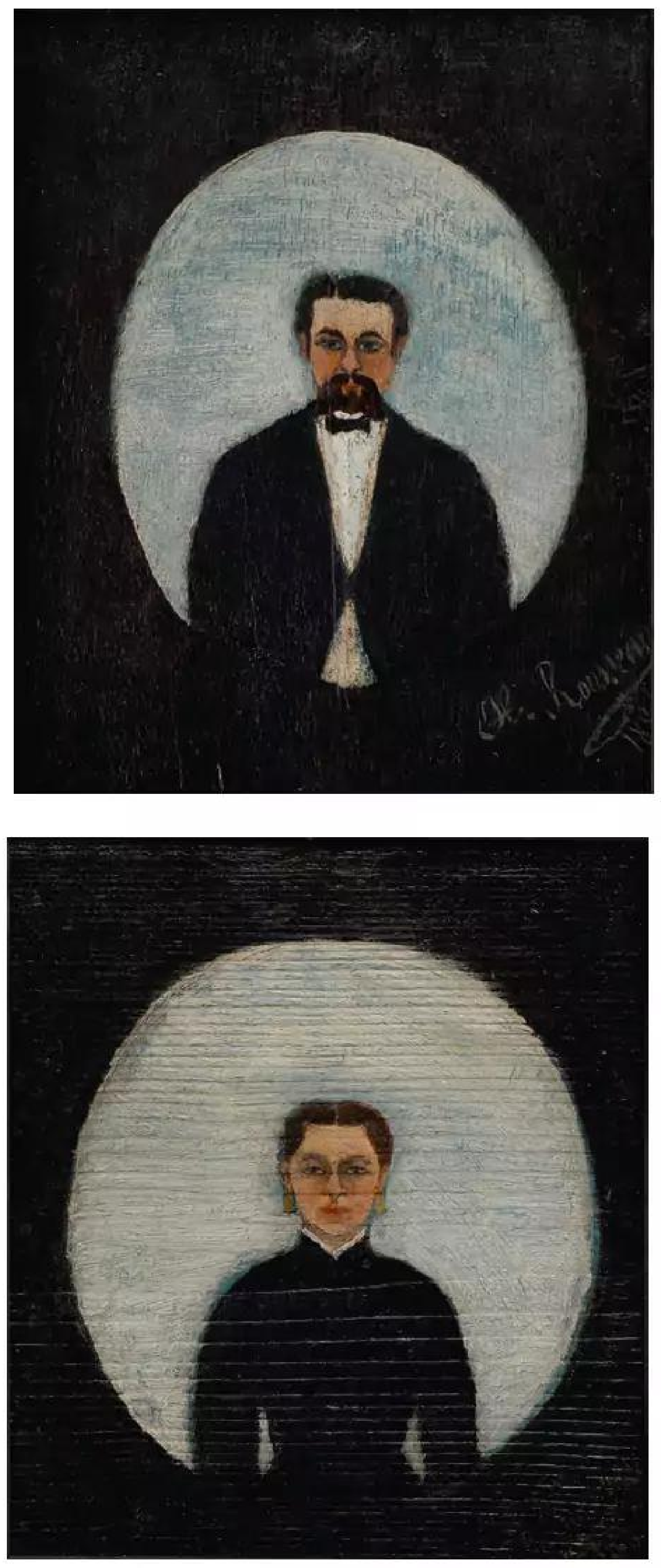
▷ MUSÉE DE L'ORANGERIE, PARIS

***Portrait of a man* and *Portrait of a woman*, both 1887, Henri Rousseau (1844–1910)**

Top: oil on wood, 41 × 37.5cm; bottom: oil on wood, 41 × 38.5cm

Purchased with funds provided by the Society of Friends of the Musée d'Orsay and the Musée de l'Orangerie and a special donation by Mathias Ary Jan





▷ WALTERS ART MUSEUM, BALTIMORE

Peacock (shape no. 2045), designed *c.* 1875 by Paul Comoléra (1818–97), manufactured by Minton Ceramics Manufactory

Lead-glazed earthenware (majolica), 152 × 70 × 43.8cm

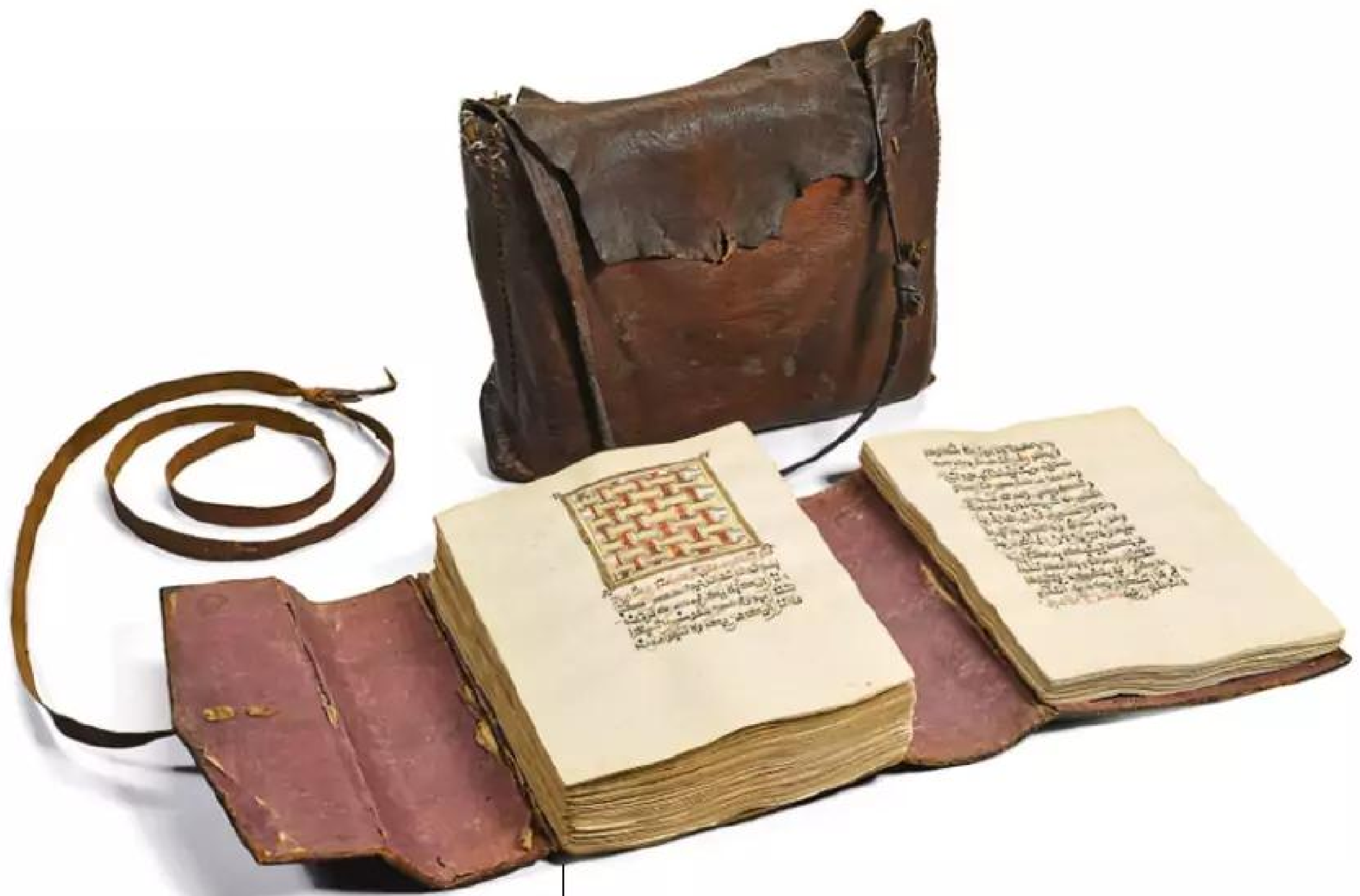
Gift of Deborah and Philip English

◁ METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, NEW YORK

Ẹlẹ́ṣin (equestrian) figure for an Erinlẹ̀ shrine, 1900–37, Maku of Erin (d. 1915) or Toibo (Toyinbo) of Erin (d. 1937), Nigeria

Wood, paint

Gift of Carol B. Kenney in memory of Jerome P. Kenney

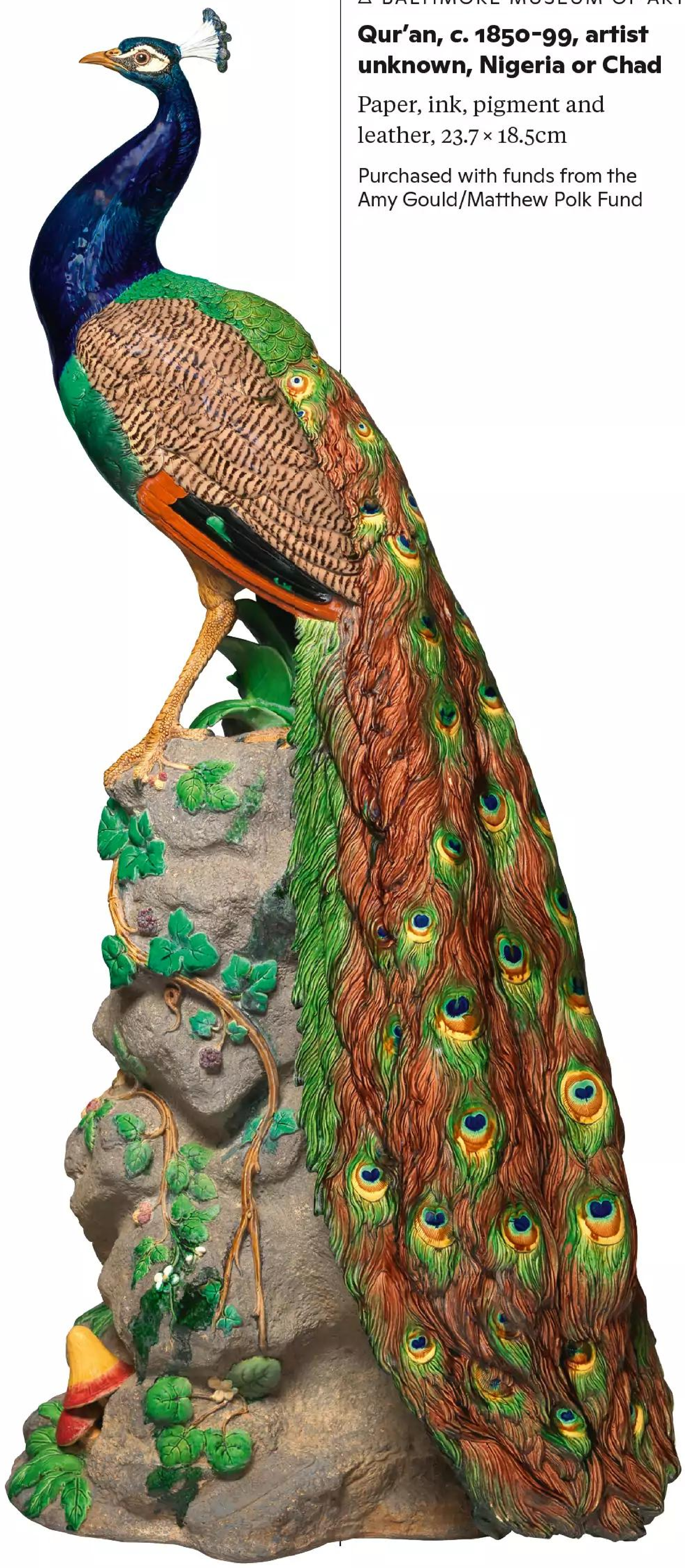


△ BALTIMORE MUSEUM OF ART

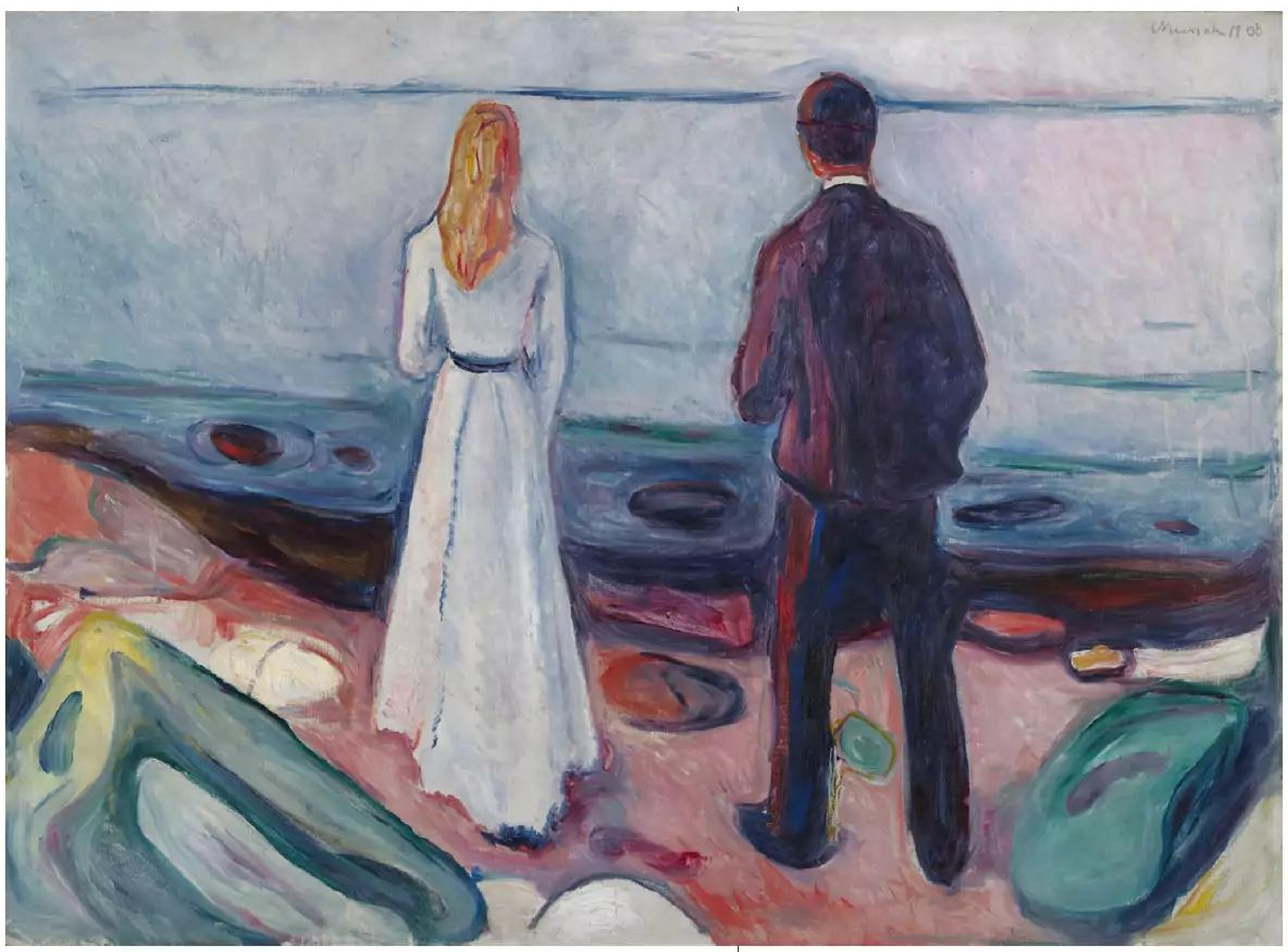
Qur'an, *c.* 1850-99, artist unknown, Nigeria or Chad

Paper, ink, pigment and leather, 23.7 × 18.5cm

Purchased with funds from the Amy Gould/Matthew Polk Fund



Orangerie photos: © Laëtitia Striffling-Marcu/Musée de l'Orangerie, dist. GrandPalaisRmn / Walters photo: © Bruce M. White 2019 / Met photo: Photo by Peter Zeray; © The Metropolitan Museum of Art / Baltimore photo: Mitro Hood

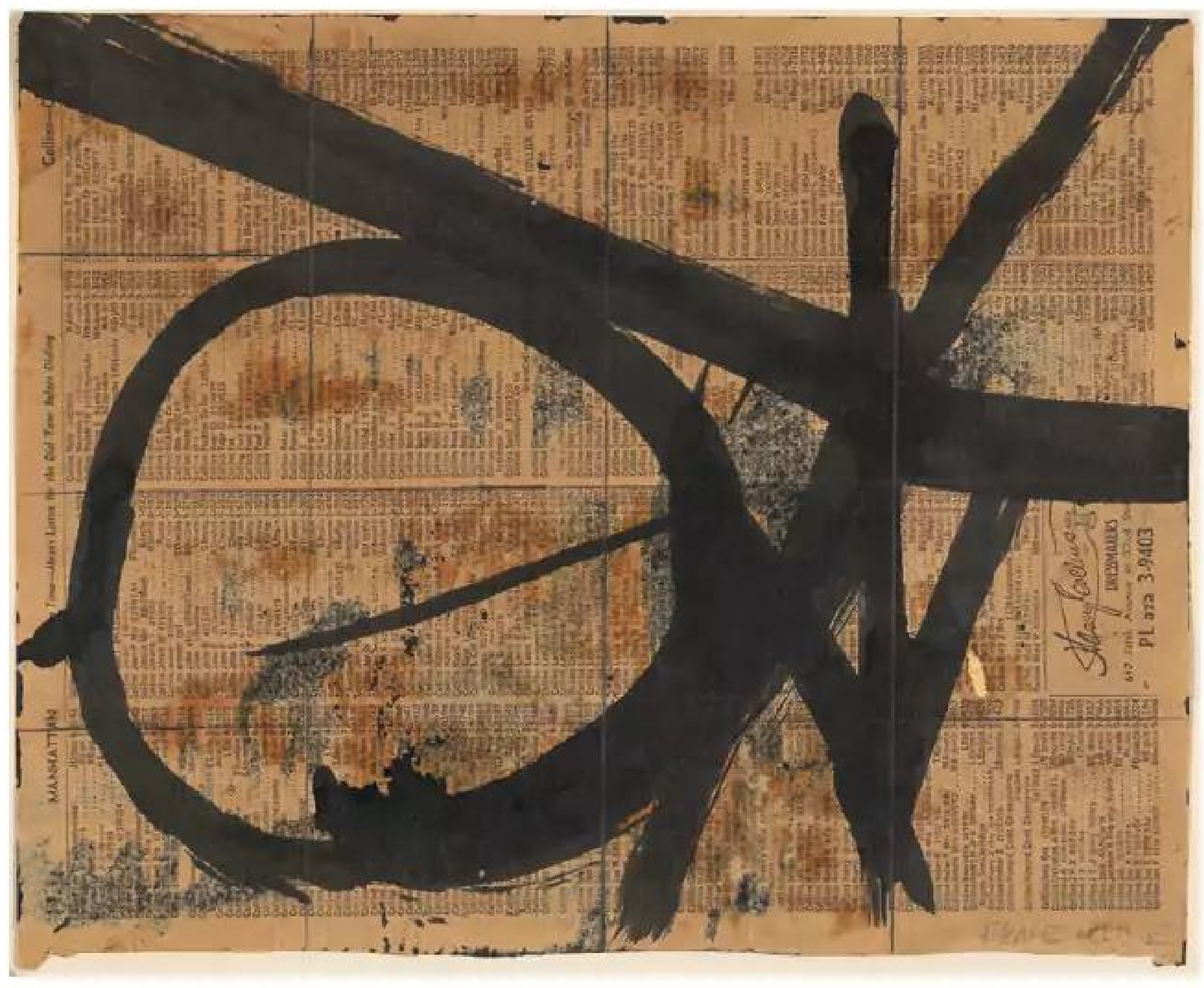


△ HARVARD ART MUSEUMS, CAMBRIDGE

Works by Edvard Munch from the Philip and Lynn Straus Collection

Pictured: *Two Human Beings (The Lonely Ones)*, 1906–08, Edvard Munch (1863–1944), oil on canvas, 81.3 × 111.5 cm

Gift from the Philip and Lynn Straus Collection



△ NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART, WASHINGTON, D.C.

60 modern and contemporary works from the collection of Lenore and Bernard Greenberg

Pictured: *Ink Study for Hoboken*, 1951, Franz Kline (1910–62), pencil, brush and ink and tempera on telephone-book page, 22.2 × 27.9cm

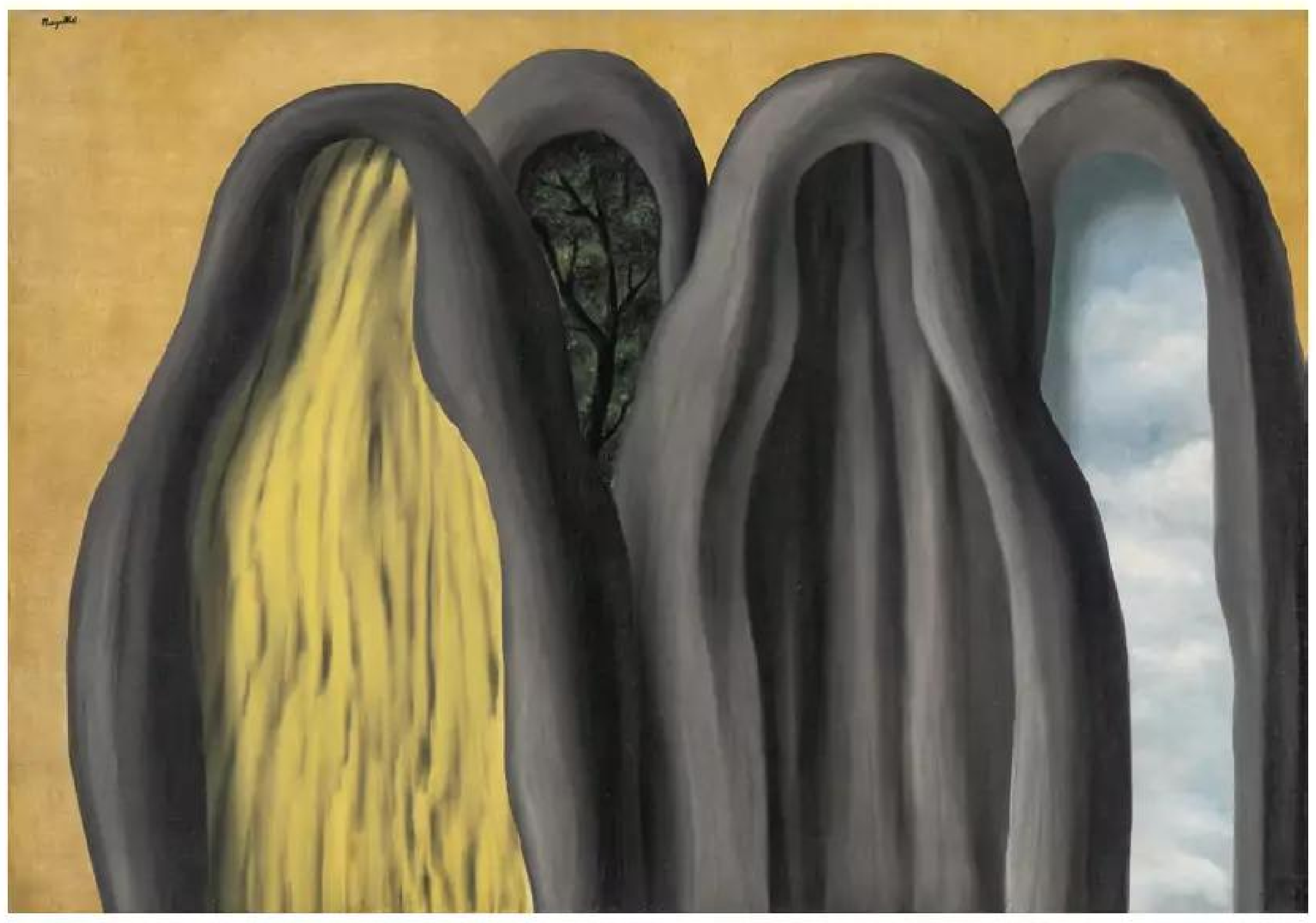
Gift of Lenore S. and Bernard A. Greenberg

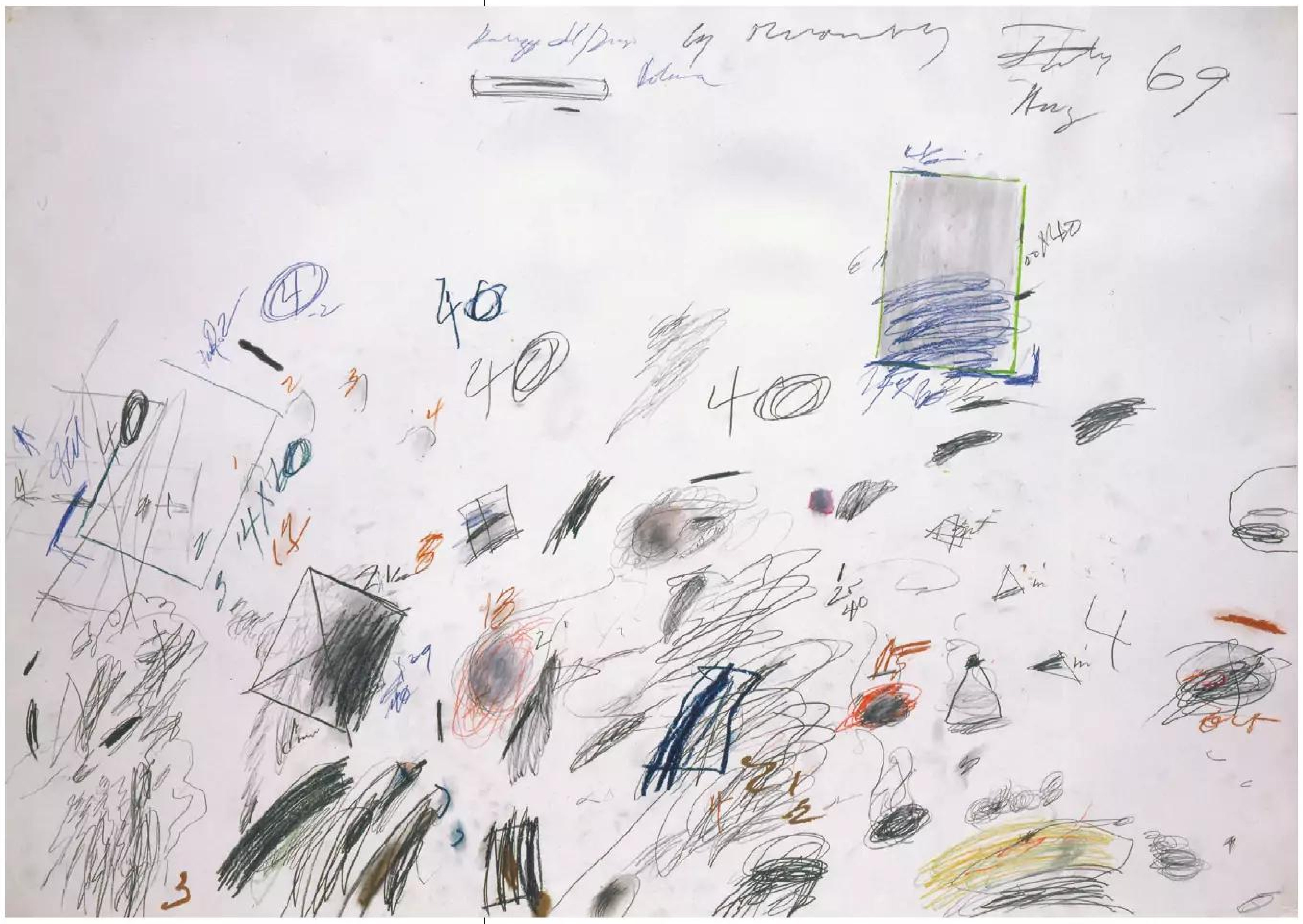
▽ HAMBURGER KUNSTHALLE

***The Palace of Curtains*, 1928, René Magritte (1898–1967)**

Oil on canvas, 81 × 116cm

Purchased with funds provided by the Hamburger Kunstsammlungen Foundation, together with the Hamburger Kunsthalle, the Campe Historical Art Foundation, the Heinz H. O. Schröder Foundation, and private patrons





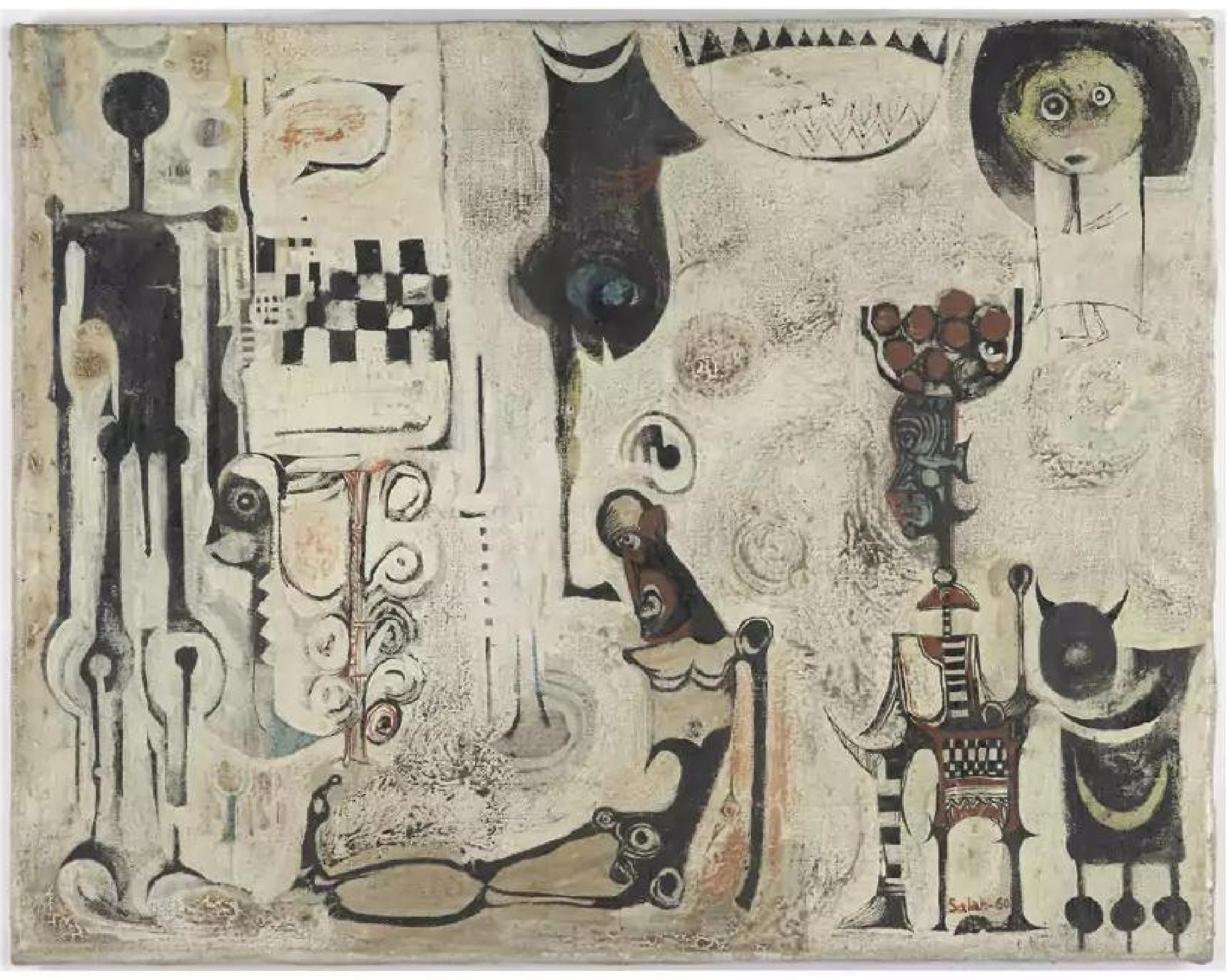
△ MENIL COLLECTION, HOUSTON

123 works by Cy Twombly

Pictured: *Untitled*, 1969, Cy Twombly (1928–2011), pencil, wax crayon, coloured pencil, felt-tip pen, 73 × 102cm

Gift of the Cy Twombly Foundation

Harvard photo: © President and Fellows of Harvard College; courtesy Harvard Art Museums / Hamburger Kunsthalle photo: Christoph Irrgang; © SHK/Hamburger Kunsthalle/bpk; © VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2025 / National Gallery photo: © Estate of Franz Kline / Menil photo: © Cy Twombly Foundation



◁ PRINCETON UNIVERSITY ART MUSEUM

***Alphabet No. 1*, 1960, Ibrahim El-Salahi (b. 1930)**

Oil and enamel on canvas, 36 × 46cm

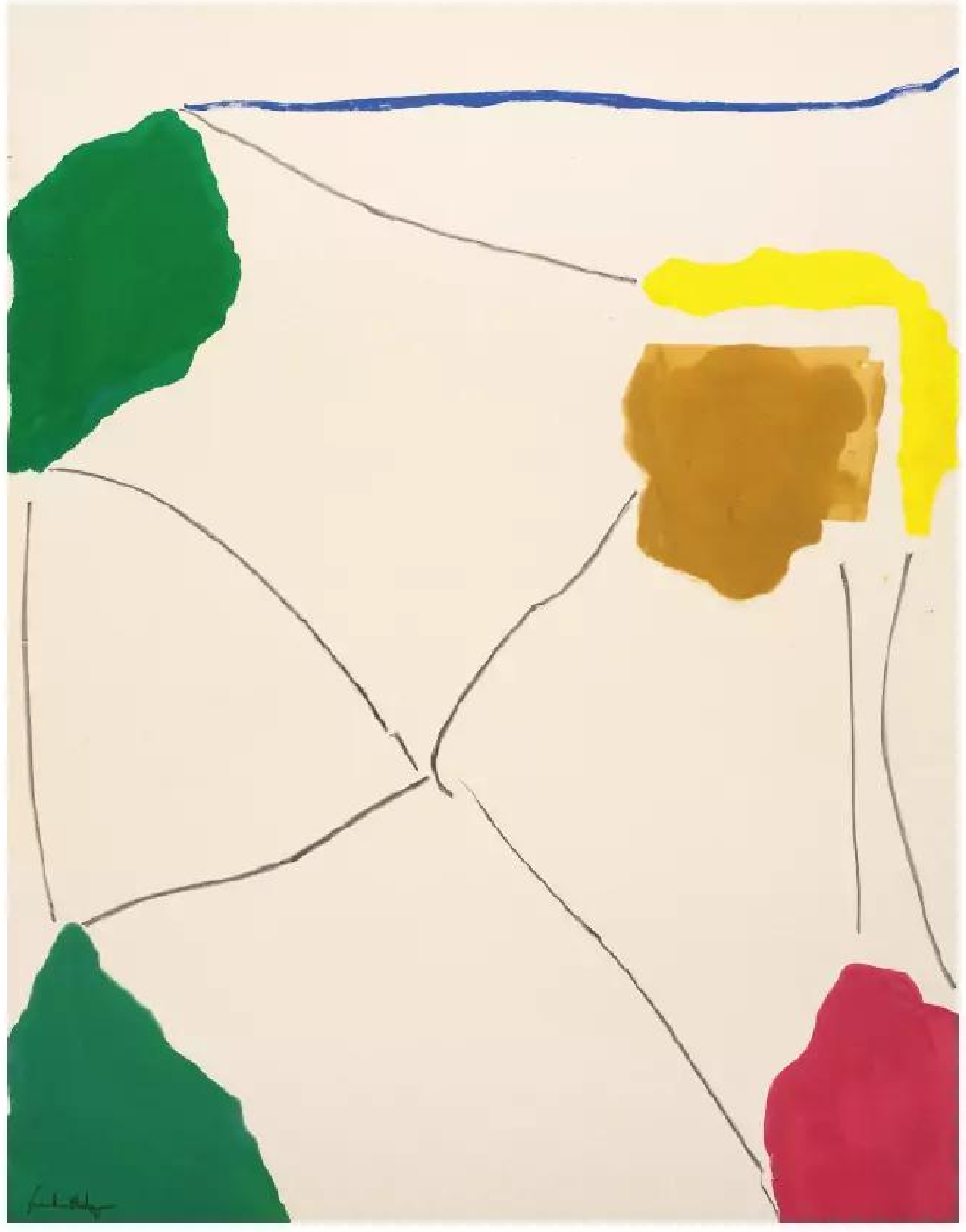
Purchased with funds from the Fowler McCormick, Class of 1921, Fund

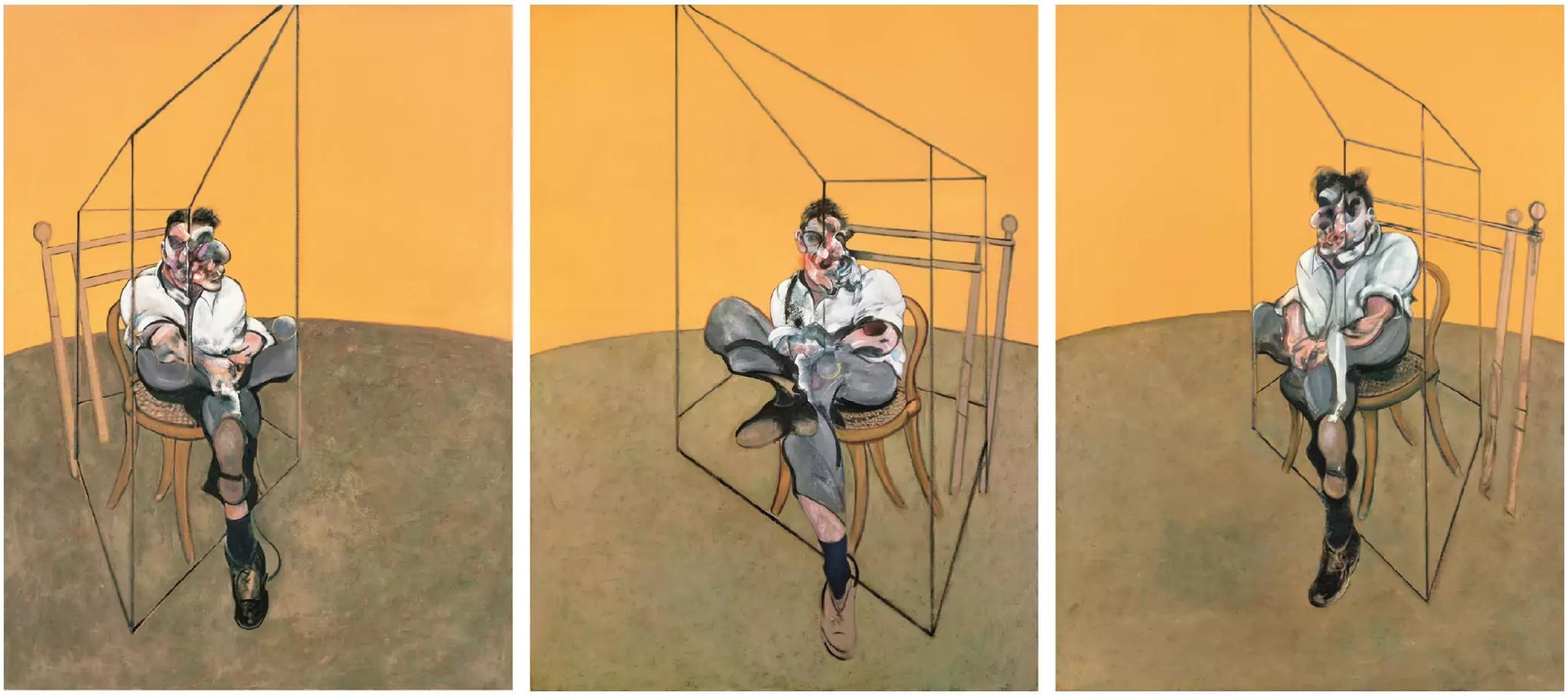
▷ STEDELIJK MUSEUM, AMSTERDAM

***Hommage à H.M.*, 1971, Helen Frankenthaler (1928–2011)**

Acrylic and marker on canvas, 203.2 × 160cm

Gift of Helen Frankenthaler Foundation





△ LOS ANGELES COUNTY MUSEUM OF ART

***Three Studies of Lucian Freud*, 1969, Francis Bacon (1909–92)**

Oil on canvas, each panel 198 × 147.5cm

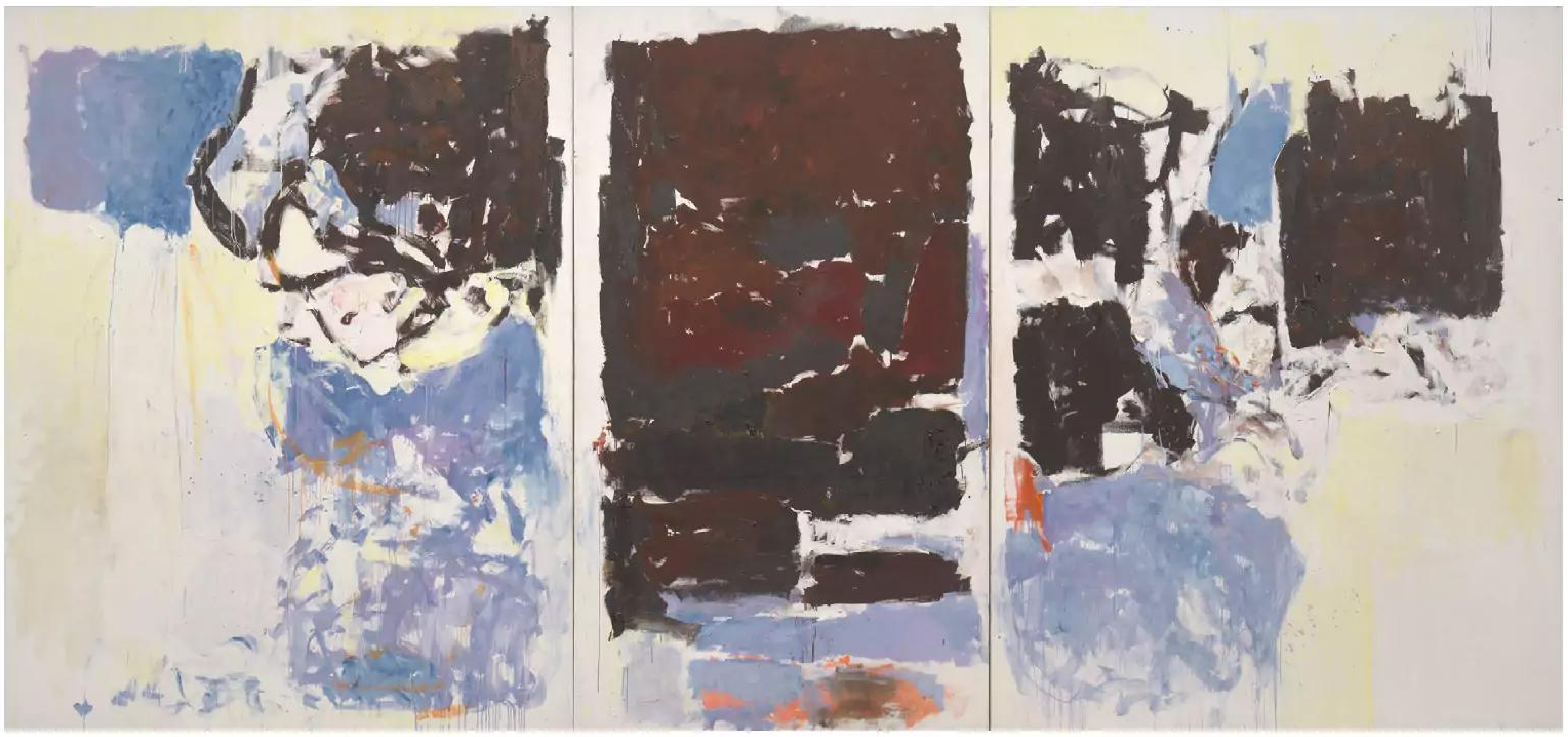
Gift of Elaine P. Wynn

▷ TATE MODERN, LONDON

***Iva*, 1973, Joan Mitchell (1925–92)**

Oil on canvas, 280 × 600cm

Gift of Jorge M. and Darlene Pérez



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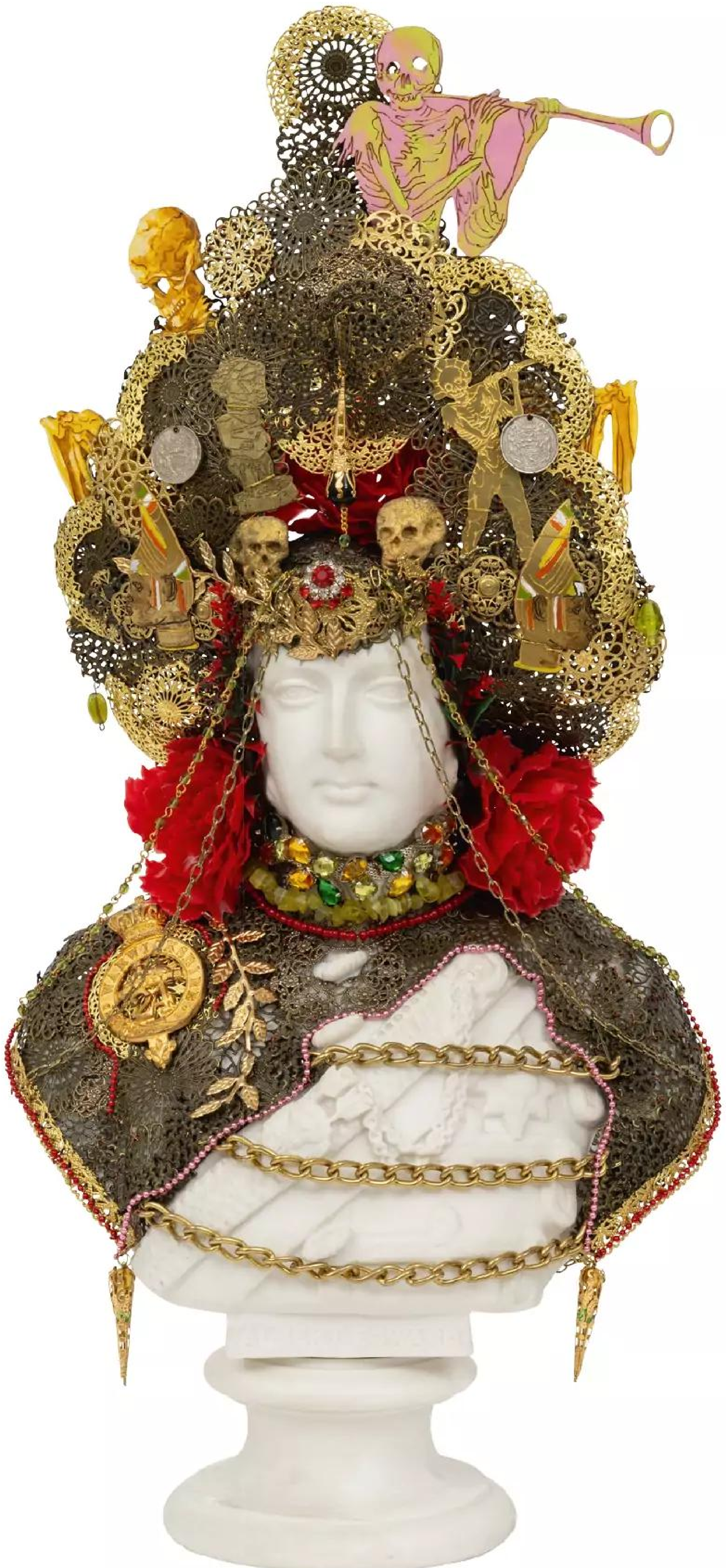
△ NATIONAL GALLERY OF CANADA, OTTAWA

61 artworks from Bob Rennie and the Rennie Family

Pictured: Installation view of *The American Library* (2018) by Yinka Shonibare (b. 1962)

Gift of the Rennie Foundation



△ NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY, LONDON

***Souvenir 17 (Albert Edward, Prince of Wales)*, 2024, Hew Locke (b. 1959)**

Mixed media on antique Parian ware, 56 × 27.5cm

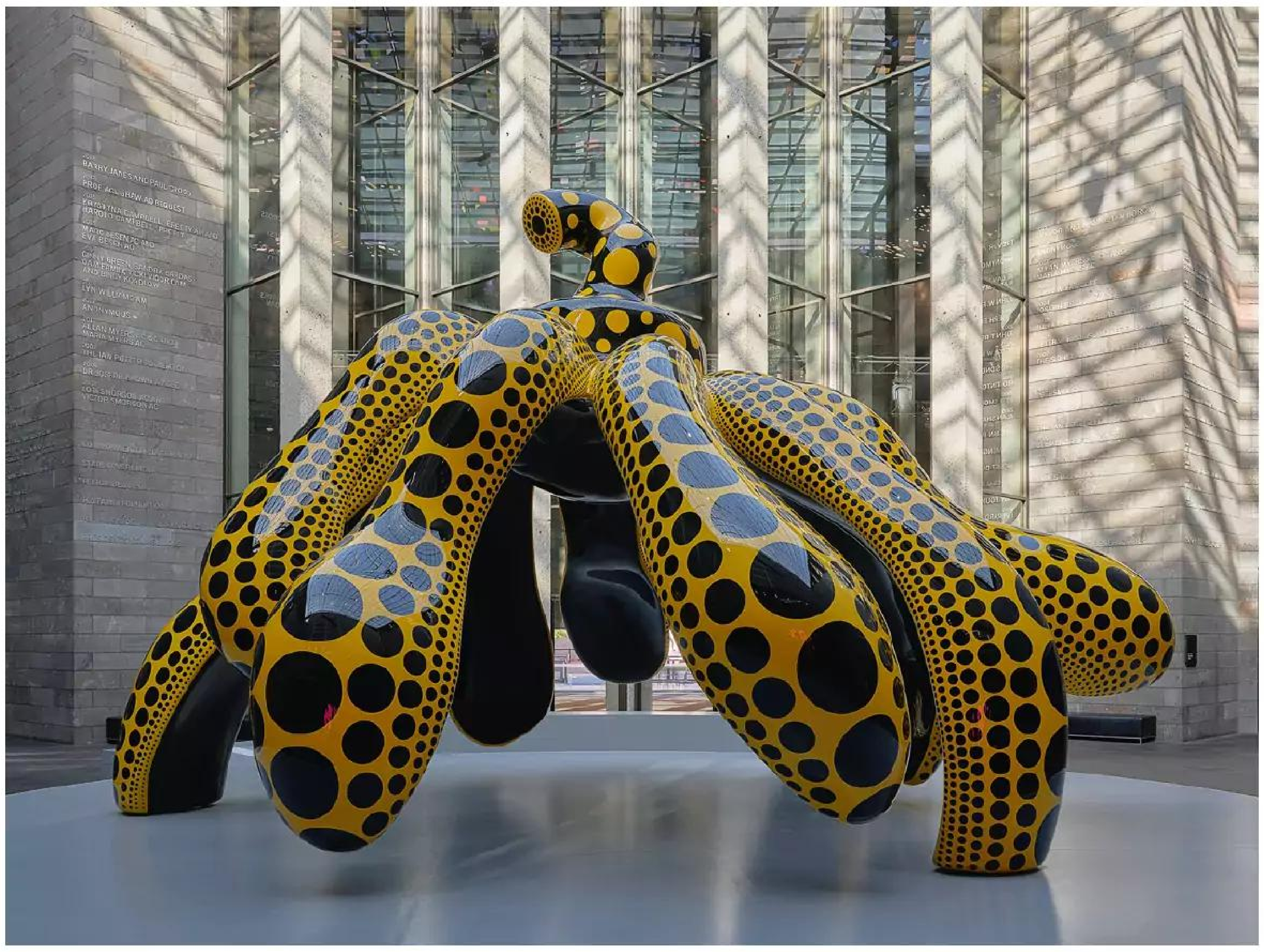
Purchased with support from the Bukhman Foundation

▽ NATIONAL GALLERY OF VICTORIA, MELBOURNE

***Dancing Pumpkin*, 2020, Yayoi Kusama (b. 1929)**

Bronze, urethane paint, 490.2 × 777.2 × 744.2cm

Purchased with funds from the Loti and Victor Smorgon Fund

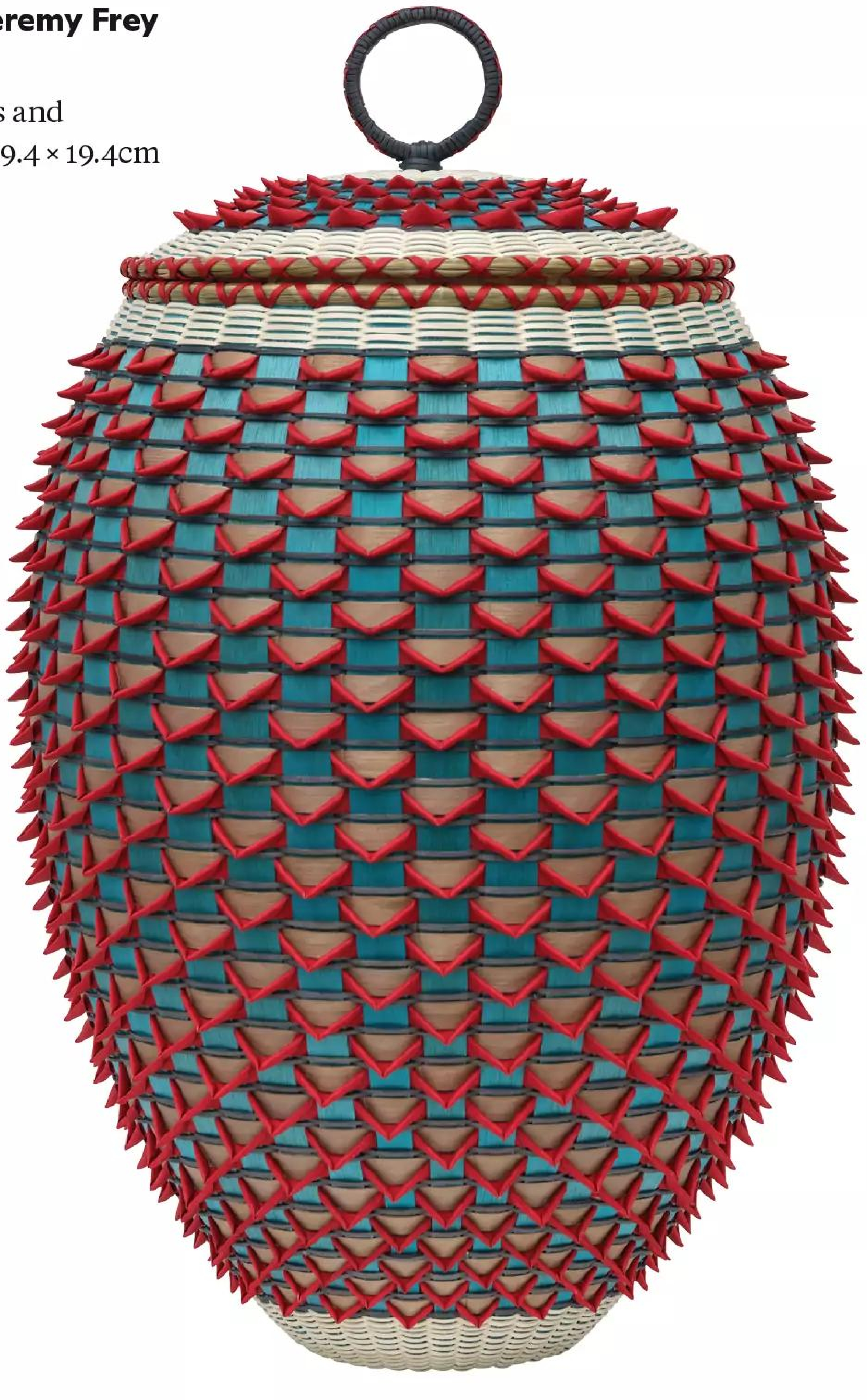


▷ CANTOR ARTS CENTER AT STANFORD UNIVERSITY

***Presence*, 2024, Jeremy Frey (b. 1978)**

Black ash, sweetgrass and synthetic dye, 31.4 × 19.4 × 19.4cm

Purchased with funds from the Anonymous B Acquisitions Fund



NEW

The prophets and sibyls of Saint-Sernin, sculpted by Jean Bauduy in 1523, stand in the church of the Musée des Augustins, Toulouse

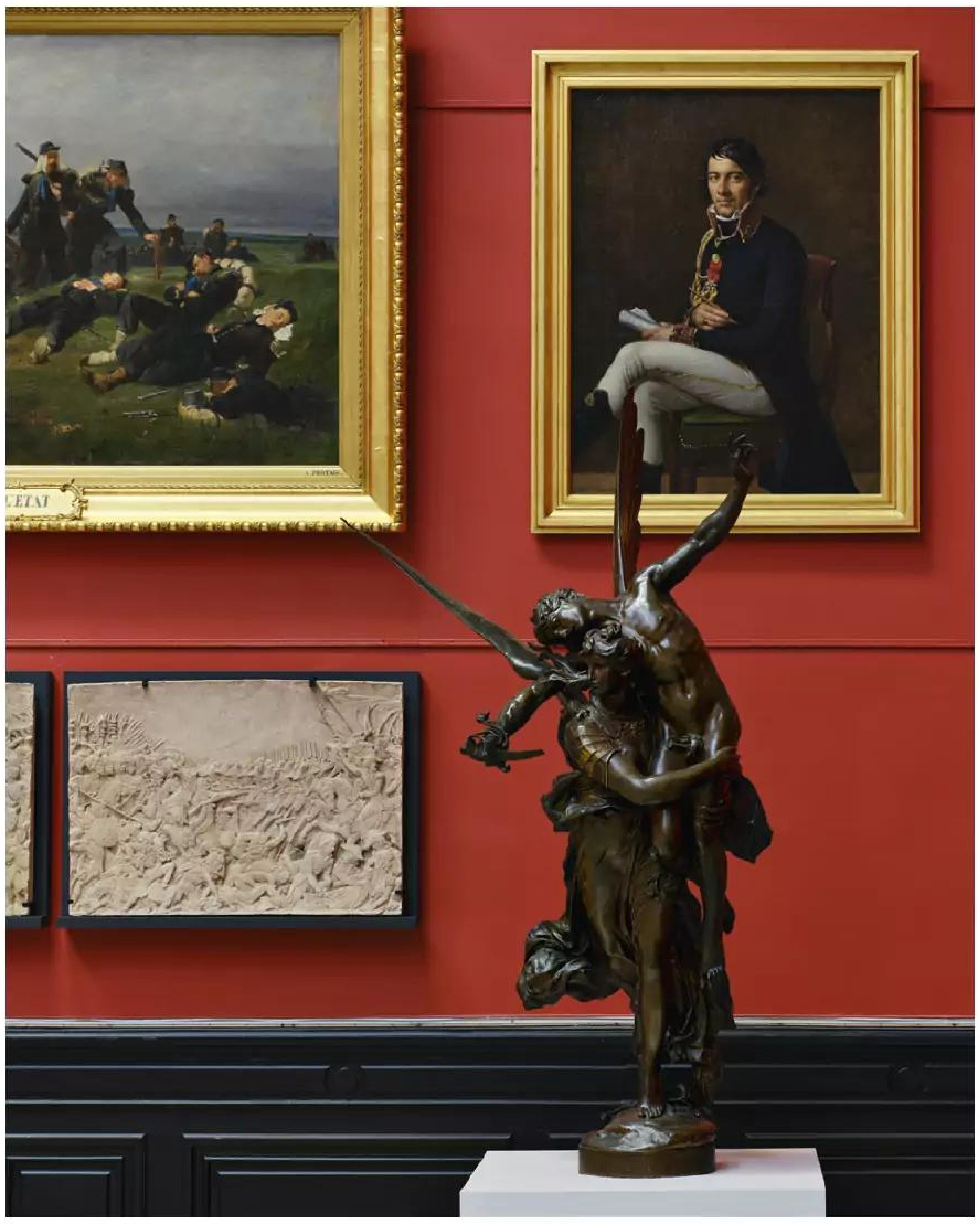
ORDER

The Musée des Augustins in Toulouse – a world-class fine-art museum housed in a medieval former convent – is one of the oldest museums in France. An ambitious revamp has brought it into the modern age

BY MICHAEL DELGADO

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MAGALI PAULIN

The organ in the museum's church was designed in 1981 by Jürgen Ahrend and was based on baroque German organ designs



The red gallery, with Antonin Mercie's *Gloria Victis* (1874) in the foreground and Marie-Guilhelmine Benoist's *Portrait of Baron Larrey* (1804) top right

I am standing in the cloister of the Musée des Augustins in Toulouse, looking out into the garden at a pile of rubble. To my right, six or seven Romanesque sculptures are lined up neatly along the wall, each one swaddled in plastic. The longer I stand there, the more those wrapped figures start to take on other forms: body bags, sleeping bags, emergency blankets, sacks of loot, bubble wrap.

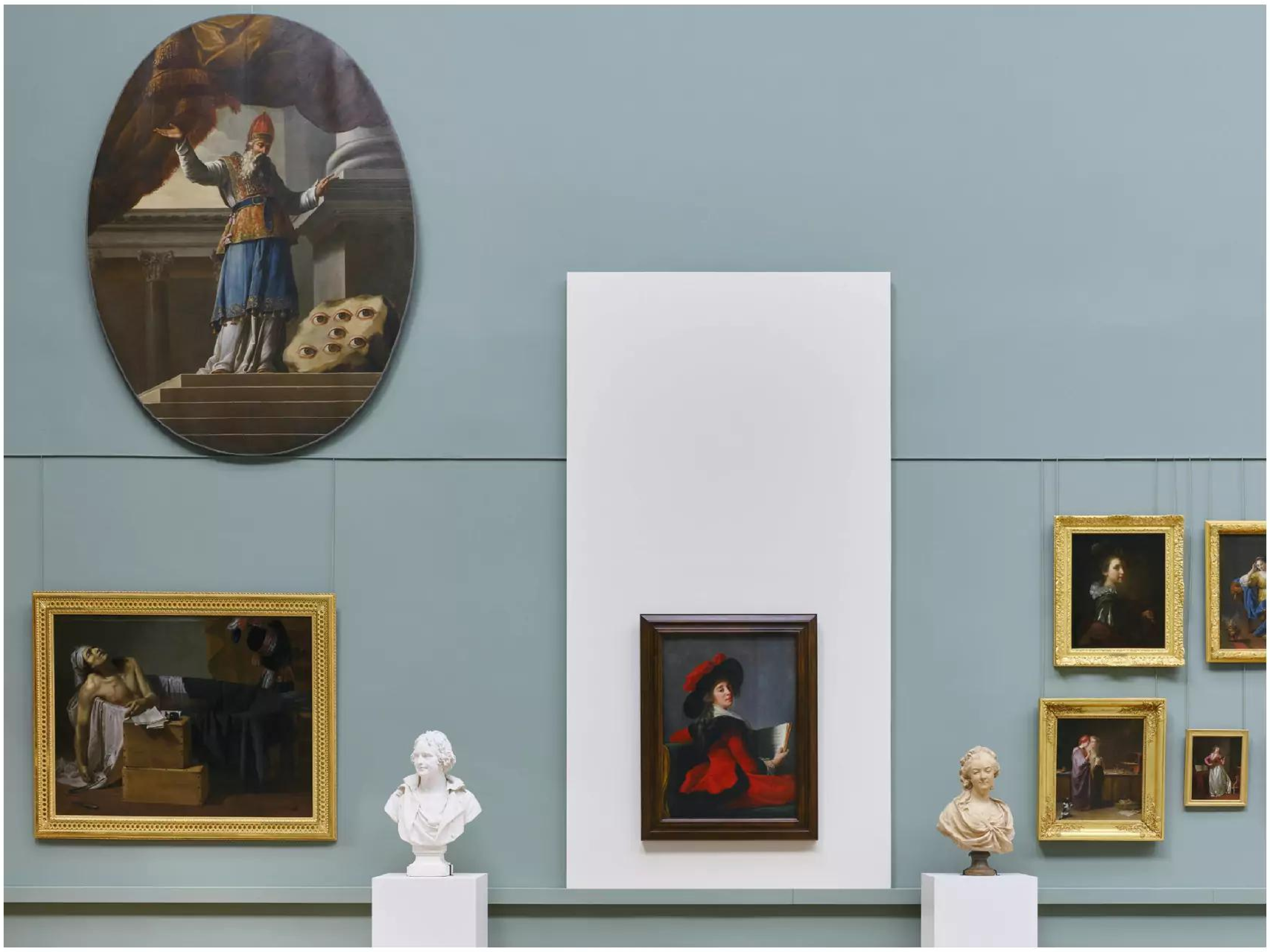
All of these associations feel apt for this extraordinary place, which is, when I visit in late October, approaching the final stages of a seven-year period of renovation, since the building has served many different purposes over the years, some all at once: a religious complex, a secular museum, a home for plundered goods, a haven for endangered artworks and a marker of local pride for France's fourth-largest city. Constructed in the 14th century as an Augustinian convent – a bastion of resistance against the spread of Catharism, a sect regarded as heretical by the Catholic Church – the complex was occupied by Augustinians until the French Revolution. At that point it was secularised, reopening in 1795 as the Musée de la Republique, a repository for many of the works that were confiscated from the French aristocracy and clergy.

Since then, the museum has been through several more overhauls, notably in the 19th century when much of the building was demolished and rebuilt, primarily in order to dampen the museum's overtly religious characteristics. In the 1940s another period of works began, in which the 'Temple of the Arts' – designed in the 1830s by the pleasingly named architect and urban planner Urbain Vitry and plonked down in the church – was removed. At the same time, chapels, various windows and the walls of the gothic halls were restored, extensive archaeological excavations were conducted and a new entrance was built, modelled on a now-destroyed Augustinian chapel nearby.

This latest raft of transformations, then, might not seem all that major, but Toulouse's most important museum has been shut, on and off, since 2018, leaving a significant gap in the cultural life of the city. The works began with a partial closure to allow for renovations to the glass roofs of the painting and sculpture gallery and a project to make the site more accessible, before attention turned in the last couple of years to more major curatorial changes. It has all cost some €14m, almost half of which has been spent on the new entrance, an angular, white, cavernous structure that is at once strikingly modern and – with its long, arched ceiling – carries a faintly ecclesiastical echo.

The entrance became visible from the street only in August but, if the somewhat feverish local news coverage is anything to go by, some Toulousians are already taking umbrage with the decision of the architects, the Portugese firm Aires Mateus, to use white stone from the Dordogne, rather than the pinkish clay bricks from which the rest of the museum is built. My guide at the museum, Isabelle Balon-Barberis, tells me Toulousians have always had 'a bit of a complex' about not having a distinctive local stone in the manner, for instance, of Paris and Bordeaux. That may help explain the over-correction performed by Toulouse's architects, who plumped for pink bricks throughout the city and earned Toulouse the nickname of 'La Ville Rose'.

The museum is being unveiled in two stages: this month the Romanesque hall and the painting and sculpture galleries will open to visitors, while the other two main spaces in the museum – the gothic gallery and the church – are scheduled to be ready by June next year. If this gives the impression that the museum has overstretched itself,



View of the painting and sculpture galleries, with Élisabeth Vigée Le Brun's *Portrait of the Baroness de Crussol* (1785) centre and Joseph Roques's *Death of Marat* (1793) on the left

I can't help feeling that it is more down to the ambition of the museum's director, Laure Dalon, who arrived in 2022 after six years as head of the Musées d'Amiens, than it is about poor planning. As we stroll along the cloister, with the view on to the cluttered garden and builders hauling scaffold poles across the courtyard, she is already thinking about what comes after this. 'In three, four, five years we hope to have built some new spaces dedicated to contemporary art,' she says. 'At the moment if we want to have temporary exhibitions, we have to be creative.'

There is already something approaching contemporary art at the museum: the Romanesque hall just off the cloister. The room is filled with 96 columns in shades of brown, orange and blue, each one topped by a carved Romanesque capital brought to the museum from endangered, restored or destroyed churches around Toulouse: the city's cathedral, the basilica of Notre-Dame de la Daurade, and the basilica of Saint-Sernin, the only one of the three that still stands today in something resembling its original 11th-century form. These capitals, which depict everything from saints to biblical scenes and Stations of the Cross to monster-headed birds, are some of the oldest pieces in the museum; the columns, and the coloured lampshades that hang over each one, are the most up-to-date works, designed by the Cuban-born artist Jorge Pardo in 2014. While the installation predated Dalon's tenure, this 'dialogue between the 12th and the 21st centuries', as she describes it, is in tune with her desire to make the museum a 'living place'.

Everything sprouts off the central cloister, which means that, as Dalon puts it, 'there is no one way to discover the museum'. It makes for a mazy, choose-your-own-adventure-style experience, which is exactly what Dalon says she has tried to evoke with her rehang of the paintings and sculpture galleries on the first floor. These two massive rooms, painted sage green and red, respectively, are the only part of the museum that really resemble a traditional gallery space. Constructed as a huge hall in the 19th century on the site of what was the convent refectory, and divided into two large rooms in the 1980s, it has soaring ceilings and cavernous skylights. Previously, the centre of each room was bare, with the paintings hung on the surrounding walls. Now sculptures, mostly 19th-century marble figures and busts, are peppered throughout the space.

In the green room, the standout is a brooding moustachioed bust by Bernard Lange of Geoffrey d'Astier (1824). A lively *Hunting Nymph* (1888) in white marble by Alexandre Falguière dominates the centre of the red room, while Antonin Mercié's bronze masterpiece *David, Vanquisher of Goliath* (1872) stands nearby, bagged up and ready to be unleashed – creating intriguing sight lines from various points. 'Beforehand, you could see everything in one go,' Dalon says. 'It was important for me to create surprises and to allow visitors different perspectives.' This has resulted in some radical interventions: a white booth, for example, within the red room, bearing paintings inside and out, all in the hope of creating a feeling of 'intimacy'.

Standing in the red room's doorway, one of the first works you see is one of the museum's most recent acquisitions: *Descent into the Abyss* (1882) by the Toulouse-born Henri Martin. It's a work of gruesome Symbolism, a gloomy

View of the Romanesque hall, with a 12th-century stone capital from the cloister of Notre-Dame de la Daurade in the foreground

Benjamin Constan

View of the red gallery, with some of Jean-Joseph Benjamin-Constant's painting *The Entry of Mahomet II into Constantinople* (1876) visible on the right cacophony of tigers, serpents and howling figures that might surprise anyone who has visited the Capitole, Toulouse's neoclassical city hall, which contains a whole room of pastoral landscapes and sunny, pointillist city views by Martin. It has, in Dalon's rehang, been partially obscured by a white marble sculpture, *The Nightmare* (1894), by the Paris-born neoclassical artist Eugène Thivier, which depicts a fitful man lying prostrate, fending off a dragon-like creature that could just as well have been modelled on a figure from Martin's painting.

If these rooms feel fuller than they did before, Dalon stresses that her intention was to 'give the feeling that there are more things to see than there are'. In fact, some culls have been made, and works moved into the staircases and other nooks of the museum. There is one work, however, that would never have left the gallery even if Dalon wanted it to. Jean-Joseph Benjamin-Constant's seven-metre-high painting, *The Entry of Mahomet II into Constantinople*, which depicts the aftermath of the two-month siege of the city by the Ottomans in 1453, is the centrepiece of the gallery. Ironically, given its title, it is far too big to get in or out through any of the museum's doors, so it remained in the gallery during the renovation work, swaddled in plastic wrap.

Commissioned by the French state in 1876 and sent straight to the Musée des Augustins, it was fed into the gallery through the tallest, thinnest door I have ever seen; stand in the red gallery today and that door is still there, just about, plastered over and painted such that it is hardly visible save for the faint outline of the hinges. There is something amusing about this secularised Augustinian convent displaying a huge memorialisation of the end of Christian Constantinople, just as there is something bold in the decision to foreground Orientalist work in these galleries. Along with Benjamin-Constant, Delacroix's magisterial *Sultan of Morocco* (1845) and the Toulousian painter Édouard Debat-Ponsan's *The Massage* (1883), a rather queasy take on Manet's *Olympia* set in a hammam in Istanbul, draw the eye here.

This all makes for a wonderful eclecticism that visitors to French regional museums will recognise, where works by lesser-known local painters – many of them revelations – are speckled with a Delacroix here, a Rodin or a Toulouse-Lautrec there. That dynamic is borne out by two of the stand-out works in the sage room, for instance, which offer opposing views of Revolutionary France. One wonders what Élisabeth Vigée Le Brun, the favourite portraitist of Marie Antoinette, would think of her painting of the Baroness de Crussol – wife of the lieutenant-general of the king's armies, clad in scintillating red and half-turned to catch the viewer's eye as she holds an opera score by Gluck, the favourite composer of, yes, Marie Antoinette – being hung a few metres from a visceral painting of the death of the Revolutionary hero Marat. The latter was made by Joseph Roques, who was born in Toulouse in 1757 and taught Ingres, among others, at the city's Royal Academy of Arts. One of several similar produced in 1793 on the encouragement of the National Convention in Paris, this version embellishes Jacques-Louis David's pre-eminent version of the scene with several added details, including an allusion to the tricolore. Few works can match the horrifying stillness that David achieves, but Roques's painting has a meticulously rendered violence that more than holds its own against Vigée Le Brun's vision of aristocratic poise.

The Musée des Augustins may today be as secular as any other French institution, but echoes of Christian benevolence can still be keenly felt. Nowhere more so than in the church – still in progress when I visit and scheduled to reopen next year – which is something of a sanctuary for the discarded. Take the gargoylish crowd of terracotta sibyls and prophets, sculpted by Jean Bauduy in 1523, which once loomed over visitors to the Basilica of Saint-Sernin. By the early 20th century these figures were so degraded that they had to be ushered into the safety of the museum, where they now stand in a semi-circle, majestic in their limblessness and their fading traces of colour.

A few metres away, I spot a panel casually propped against a side wall that turns out to be Rubens's *Christ Between the Two Thieves* (*c*. 1635), which was taken by Napoleon for the museum. It was only available for plunder, Balon-Barberis tells me, because it had been rejected from the convent in Antwerp that commissioned it, on the grounds that only an artist who doubted God's benevolence could have painted Christ letting out such a visceral howl of pain. Just opposite, I find a long painting on poplar by the 15th-century Florentine painter Giovanni di Francesco – a meticulously detailed, richly coloured work that is as good as any Pesellino or Uccello I've seen – that was stolen by the Nazis from an unknown private collection and recovered at the end of the war. It is now exhibited by the museum as an 'MNR' work (*Musées nationaux récupération*), which gives an open invitation to any descendants of the work's rightful owners to come and claim it. 'It doesn't belong to us,' Balon-Barberis says, 'but it's our duty to hang it.'

The Musée des Augustins is returning at a fascinating time for French museums

The Musée des Augustins is returning at a fascinating time for French museums. I am here not long after the heist at the Louvre and a few months into the Pompidou's five-year hiatus, two events that constitute a blow – however glancing – for Paris's unimpeachable status as the centre of the French art world. The museum's two opening dates fall either side of the French municipal elections, too, which take place in March, and Toulouse's incumbent mayor, Jean-Luc Moudenc, has already weighed in on the new entrance, telling locals that the shape and the choice of materials had been 'a big topic of debate during the consultation period'. We are yet to find out what Toulousians make of the project as a whole, but they are lucky to have a world-class museum of fine arts and an emblem of civic pride right in the heart of the city. If there are any quibbles – over the placement of a 12th-century carving, say, or the restoration of the cloister roof – it must be said that, over seven turbulent centuries, this place has seen worse.

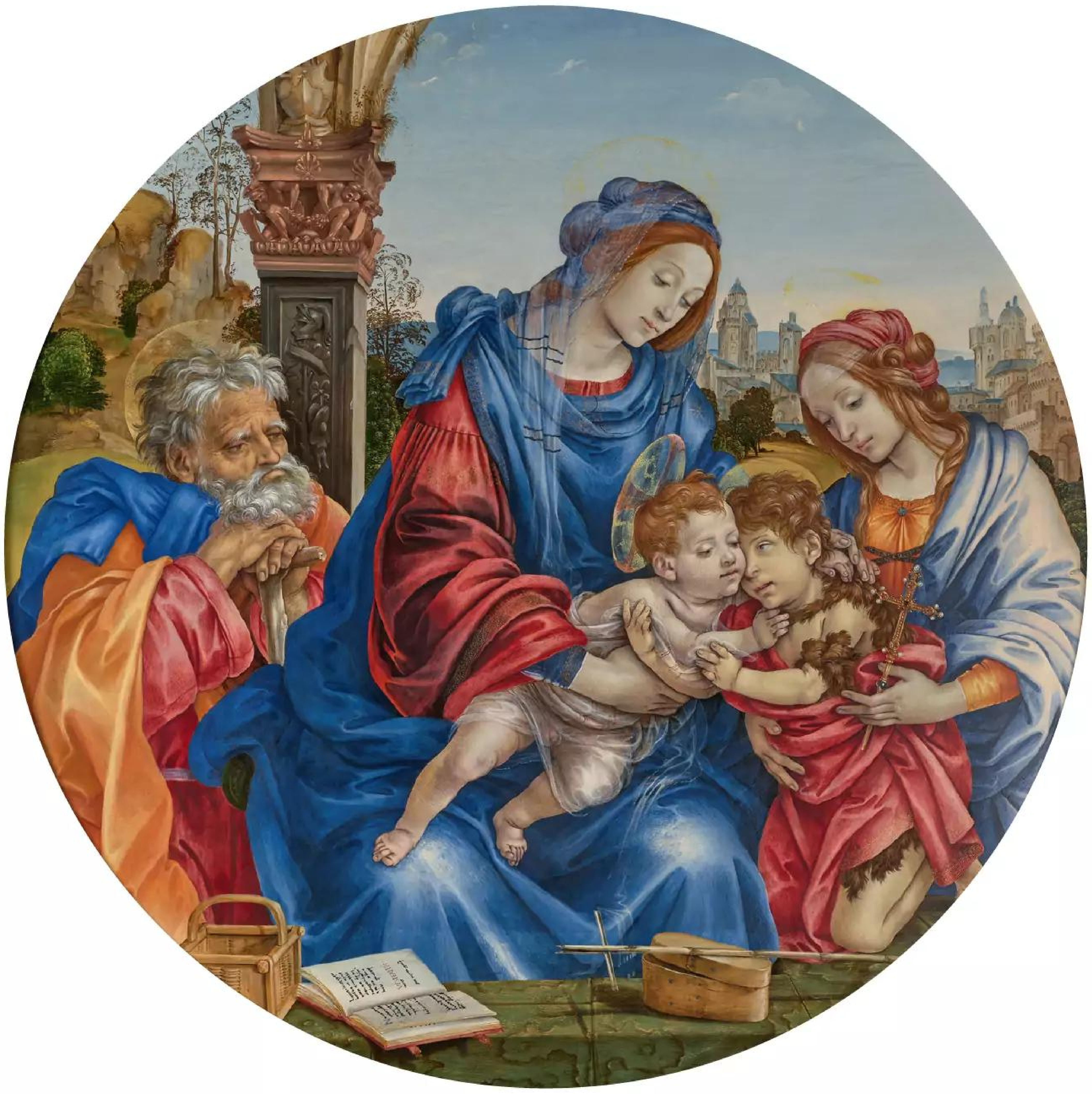
Michael Delgado is assistant editor of Apollo.

The Musée des Augustins, Toulouse, reopens on 19 December (www.augustins.toulouse.fr).

In the round

A pioneering artist of the Italian Renaissance, Filippino Lippi excelled at the circular 'tondo' form of painting. Alexander Noelle of the Cleveland Museum of Art explains the genius behind one of Filippino's most exquisite works

Detail from *The Holy Family with Saint John the Baptist and Saint Margaret* (c. 1488–93) by Filippino Lippi, showing the Christ Child in an embrace with a young John the Baptist



The Holy Family with Saint John the Baptist and Saint Margaret, c. 1488–93, Filippino Lippi (*c.* 1457–1504), tempera and oil on wood, diam. 153cm. Cleveland Museum of Art

In 1488, Filippino Lippi, then in his early 30s and one of the most revered painters in Tuscany, was called away from his most prestigious commission to date – decorating the family chapel of the banker Filippo Strozzi in Florence – to relocate to Rome. This unusual request came about by two luminaries pulling rank. It was Lorenzo de' Medici, de facto ruler of the Florentine republic, who plucked Filippino from his home city and packed him off down south. But he did so at the behest of the Neapolitan cardinal Oliviero Carafa, who wanted to commission a major cycle of frescoes for his own chapel in Rome, in the Dominican basilica Santa Maria sopra Minerva.

Filippino began work on the chapel that year – a project that would take him half a decade. But frescoes are best painted in warm conditions and, with time on his hands during the winter months, the artist took on another commission from Carafa: the exquisite tondo *The Holy Family with Saint John the Baptist and Saint Margaret* (*c.* 1488–93). A 'tondo' is a type of circular work of Renaissance art, and Filippino had tondi in his blood. He learned his craft from his father, the Dominican friar Filippo Lippi, and was later taught by Botticelli; both were noted for their skill in painting devotional works in a circular format. We take these works somewhat for granted now, but tondi were uniquely Florentine and uniquely challenging: it's not easy to squeeze four or five people into a circle.

A few years before he began work on *The Holy Family*, Filippino completed a diptych of tondi depicting the Annunciation for the government of San Gimignano. Splitting one scene into two was groundbreaking in itself, but he also orchestrated a complicated series of perspectival coups that were unique to each tondo as well as harmonious across both. It was an ingenious approach to a traditional subject and, with *The Holy Family*, his most detailed tondo yet, he took his mastery to a new level. Monumental in scale and composition, it is only slightly smaller than the largest tondo he ever made: *Virgin and Child with the Young Saint John the Baptist and Angels* (*c.* 1483), the second-largest extant tondo produced in Renaissance Italy.

In *The Holy Family*, the Virgin dandles the Christ Child on her knee. To her left is Saint Margaret, who holds young John the Baptist as he grasps the arm of Christ. These characters constitute an overlapping, interconnected unit; meanwhile, Saint Joseph sits outside this group on the left of the painting. Partly obscured by the Virgin's drapery, he seems to be divided from the others by an ancient column. Nonetheless he is a significant part of the composition. Joseph, like Mary, was mortal – the adoptive father of Christ. He indicates how we are meant to interact with this painting: serenely, in adoration and contemplation. Joseph draws you in to the composition. We look at him and he's looking at them, but he's also removed from them just like we are.

RITA·
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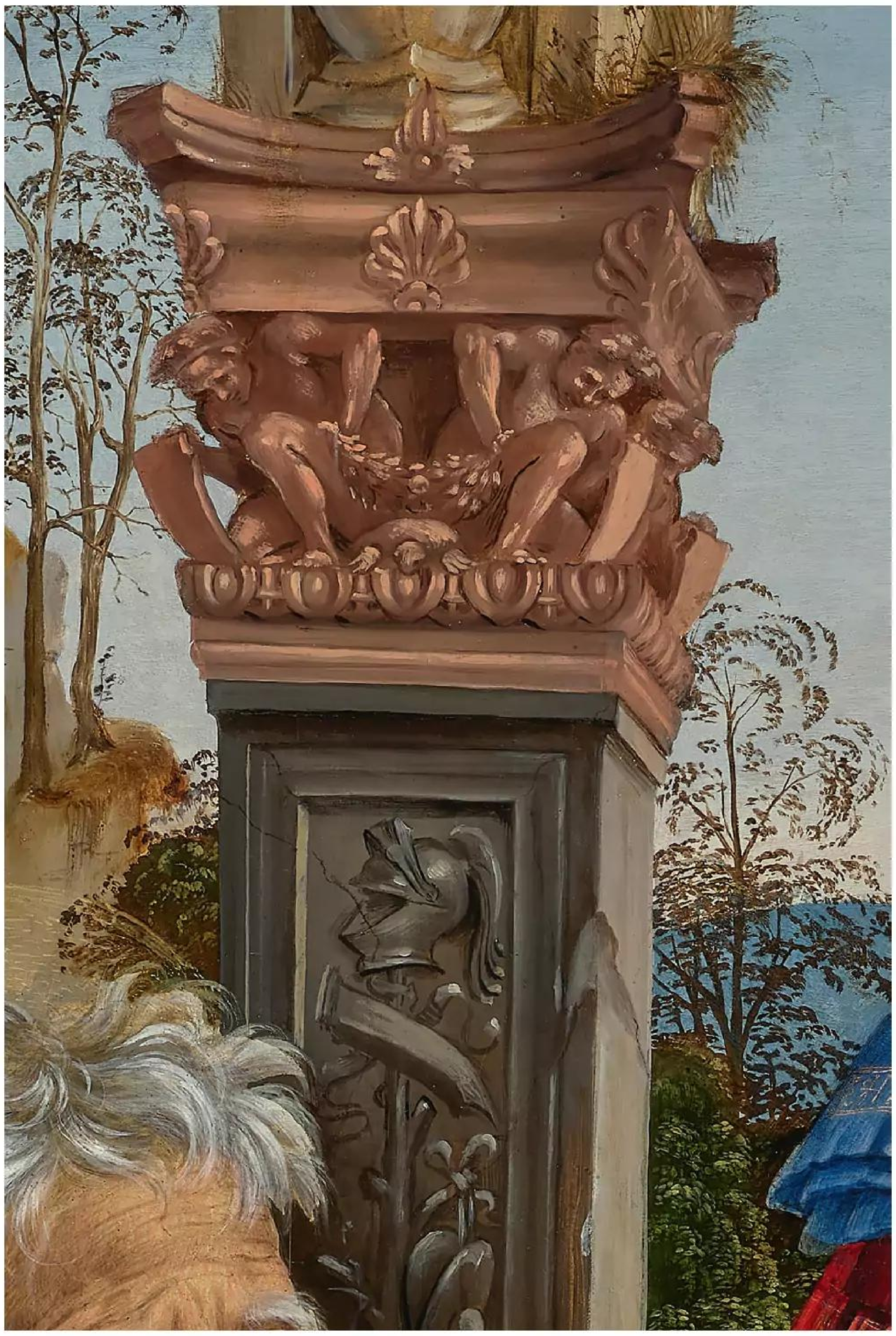
VI

Filippino's depiction of Saint Margaret is based on a sketch he made of an ancient sculpture of Venus he saw in Rome



The figures carved into this capital are thought to represent prisoners brought back by Cardinal Oliviero Carafa from Asia Minor

Equally inviting are the objects on the parapet, which seem close enough that we might almost reach out and touch them. They betray signs of Netherlandish influence: Filippino painstakingly captures the weave of the little reed basket and adds items such as the small ovular box and the reed cross on top. Devotional paintings from Northern Europe were full of such finely detailed still-life elements. Between the box and the basket lies a book, in which the text is worth noting: it is made up of recognisable characters but the words they form aren't real, they just vaguely resemble words. The first word on the right-hand page, for example, almost resembles 'Lumen', a Latin word for 'light', but doesn't quite get there. *The Holy Family* is the only known work by Filippino that does this: depictions of writing in all his other paintings are either clearly legible, if the work was large-scale – or totally illegible, if the work was intended for private devotion.

The book, placed facing the Madonna as if she had just put it down to pick up her child, is one of several references to Filippino's patron. A proud theologian, Carafa claimed Thomas Aquinas as not only his patron saint but also his ancestor, and an open book was one of the cardinal's personal symbols. But the painting also hints at a more violent side of Carafa, who, alongside his ecclesiastical duties, served as admiral of the papal navy. The cardinal surely requested Saint Margaret's presence in the painting: Margaret was believed to be from the coast of Asia Minor and it was this coast to which Carafa had laid siege in 1472, returning with Ottoman prisoners and spoils of war. On the capital of the column in the mid ground, the hunched figures holding shields – which closely resemble figures found in the Carafa family chapel – are thought to represent the prisoners he brought back.

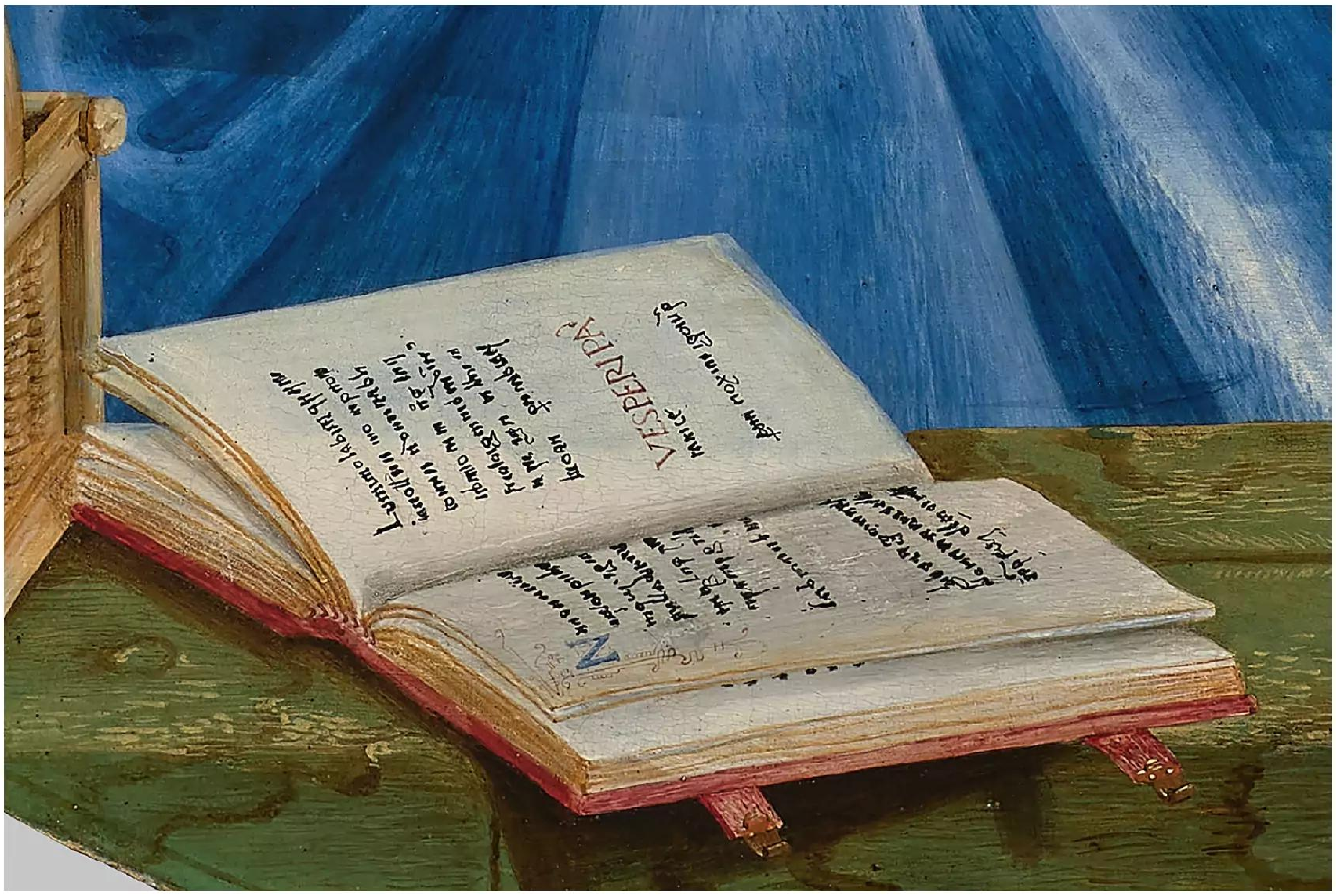
The reliefs of arms and armour on the column capture Carafa's military prowess and his erudition simultaneously. They refer to Ephesians, in which it is said that the faithful should wear the 'armour of God', complete with the 'breastplate of righteousness', the 'shield of faith', the 'helmet of salvation' and the 'sword of the Spirit'. All are visible on the column, which has been carefully painted to look like a ruin, with pieces chipped off and vegetation growing on the capital. As in several works by artists including Botticelli, it implies Christ is the new order, rising from the ashes of the pagan world of old.

Filippino may well have based the column on a specific piece of ancient architecture he saw in Rome. Of course, Florence had its fair share of antiquities, but there were far more in the Eternal City and, in *c.* 1480, after a teenager accidentally fell into a grotto that contained the long-forgotten ruins of Emperor Nero's Domus Aurea, Rome became a destination for antiquarians and artists keen to descend through holes in the ground to draw inspiration from the ancients. Filippino filled whole sketchbooks with records of architecture, sculpture and murals he discovered in Rome; he transformed one sketch of an ancient sculpture of Venus into an idealised female saint, which he used as a template for holy women in multiple paintings – including Saint Margaret in *The Holy Family*.

The years Filippino spent in Rome were the fulcrum of his career. Not only did he start incorporating decorative elements he'd seen in his studies of antiquity, but his conception of space also evolved. He began to pull the principal figures closer to the foreground, informed by his study of ancient reliefs such as those on sarcophagi. In *The Holy Family* it's remarkable how he manages to balance the intricate, intimate still-life elements in the foreground with the monumental sacred vision behind them, filled out by hierarchical-scale figures – the Madonna is by far the largest character – and expanses of flowing drapery.

Fabric was central to the Florentine economy. Like Botticelli and Filippo Lippi before him, Filippino knew good silk and understood that painting it well created the impression of wealth and magnificence, an impression Carafa was keen to furnish. Lapis lazuli, which had to be imported from the Middle East, was far more expensive than gold; where normally this pigment was reserved for the Virgin's mantle, there is lapis lazuli over everything in this painting, even on the roofs in the background and in the sky. The voluminous jewel-tone fabrics in *The Holy Family* cast their own deep shadows: sculptural and craggy, they are almost like mountains, giving heft and weight to the figures who wear them.

It is perhaps here that Filippino departs most from ancient tradition, in which fabric was depicted as skin-tight or designed to accentuate certain muscles or parts of the body. In *The Holy Family* we can't get much of a sense of anyone's physique except that of Christ, who is swaddled in a diaphanous veil. Filippino's handling of



Filippino included writing in many of his works, but this is the only one in which the text hovers between legible and illegible

Christ demonstrates his extraordinary delicacy, from the opalescent halo that glints like the skin of a soap bubble to the child's translucent garment. Not only is the veil supremely well rendered, it also tells a story: see how it ascends from the half-open box on the parapet like a wisp of smoke, past the reed cross and up to encircle Christ. The Crucifixion, the Entombment and the Resurrection are there to see in this one vertical line, which, in a final masterstroke, continues upwards to seemingly become one with the Madonna's own veil.

Also evident in the focal point of the painting is Filippino's strength of line. Though influenced by Botticelli's talent for graceful figures defined by clear outlines, Filippino took his command of line a step further to indicate space and collapse space at the same time. If we look closely at the way the Virgin's hand reaches over John the Baptist's shoulder, we see a very clearly defined border between her index finger and the Christ Child's pinkie. But look even closer and it's impossible to tell whether it's hovering over his hand or actually touching it. In fact, no one in the painting is touching Christ directly; he is always mediated either by a veil or by an ambiguous space. The children's faces overlap while not overlapping: the line that defines Christ's cheek is the same one that defines John the Baptist's little nose.

Filippino wasn't the first artist to ever show children with overlapping faces, but his distinctive way with collapsing space was seized upon in Florence by Raphael and other major artists. Although the painting itself didn't travel to Florence as far as we know, Filippino's cartoons for it did, and this is how the motif gained currency. Upon his return to Florence after the Carafa commission, Filippino counted Leonardo da Vinci as a peer and took over three of his commissions in the city when Leonardo moved to Milan.

Now in the collection of the Cleveland Museum of Art, *The Holy Family* is generally thought to be the most important work by Filippino in a collection outside of Europe. The manner in which the painting came to Cleveland is rather more dramatic than most museum acquisitions. After spending most of its life in Carafa collections in Rome and Naples, it was acquired at the turn of the 20th century for Susan Cornelia Clarke, a Boston socialite and philanthropist who was second only to Isabella Stewart Gardner in the avidness of her collecting.

Clarke was a major donor to the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, where it was generally assumed that the painting would end up. Her children, however, had concerns about the conditions of the museum's galleries. They tried to give it to Gardner, an avowed super-fan of Filippino Lippi. But she had already finalised the hang of her namesake museum and the tondo was too magnificent a painting simply to be slotted in; and so, tearfully, she declined. The dealer Joseph Duveen was interested for a time, furtively sending telegrams in code to his London office (codename of Bernard Berenson, agent and advisor to the firm: 'Doris'), but ultimately Clarke's heirs were so insistent that the painting remain on public display and in suitable conditions that the Cleveland Museum of Art emerged the surprise winner in 1929. The rest, as they say, is art history.

As told to Arjun Saijp.

Alexander Noelle is curator of European paintings and sculpture from 1500–1800 at the Cleveland Museum of Art.

'Filippino Lippi and Rome' is at the Cleveland Museum of Art until 22 February 2026.

RAISING

M.R. James is known as the 'father of folk horror'. But his ghost stories were deeply informed by his work at the Fitzwilliam Museum – and the spookiness of antique objects

BY CHRISTINA J. FARADAY

THE DEAD

The Founder's Entrance of the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, photographed in the 19th century

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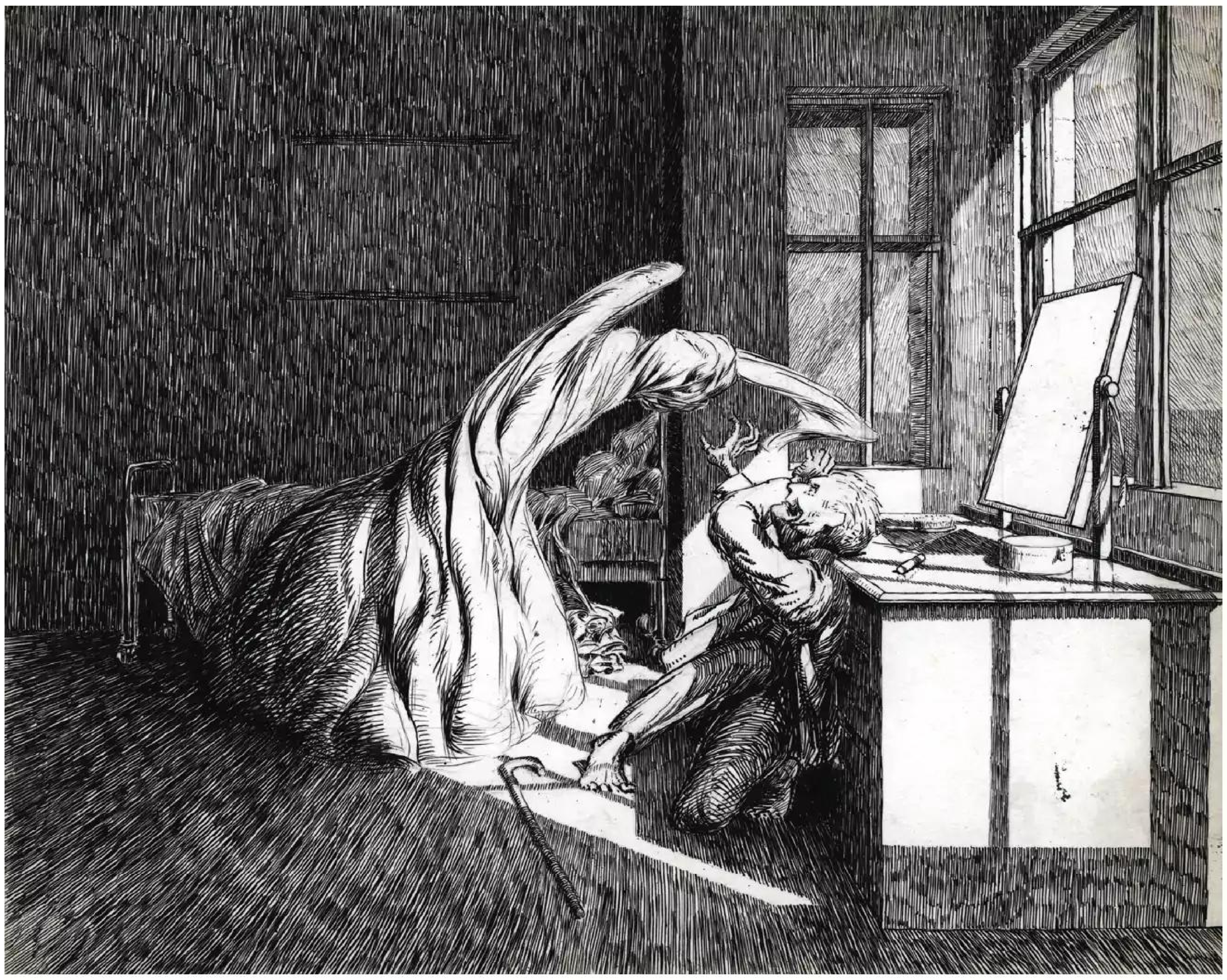
Illumination from a German manuscript of Jacobus de Teramo's *Consolatio Peccatorum, seu Processus Luciferi Contra Jesum Christum*, c. 1461



James McBryde's original illustration for 'Oh, Whistle, and I'll Come to You, My Lad' in *Ghost Stories of an Antiquary* (1904) by M.R. James

The events that I mean to relate took place some while ago, but the feeling they produced in me lingers as freshly as if it were yesterday. At that time, the local museum had been under refurbishment for many years. Being of antiquarian inclination I eagerly awaited its reopening, and when the appointed evening finally arrived, I took myself along to admire the new galleries. Many of the objects I remembered from the earlier displays: a Bronze Age funerary urn, a 17th-century cradle, a Roman stone coffin. Alongside them were several things I did not recognise: a Roman pipeclay figurine, recovered from a child's grave; a lead curse tablet, wishing for its victim to turn to pus. There were trinket boxes and medicine bottles; old tin toys and costume jewellery; embroidered dresses and little silken shoes. In short, it was the usual miscellaneous accretion of a provincial people and their lives.

On first entering the main gallery, I had found myself in a throng of visitors, many of them families with young children, talking and laughing about what they saw. Between the hubbub of conversation and the noise of the interactive exhibits, I found it difficult to concentrate, so I waited patiently for the others to move on. Gradually the room emptied out. At last, I thought, I could read the labels in peace. I walked from case to case, admiring this teapot, that matchbox, that toy dog on wheels. Now the gallery was quiet, yet still I found I could not settle. Although quite alone with the accumulations of so many centuries, I began to feel that I was not alone after all – that the room was, in fact, full of people. I had the sensation of being jostled in an invisible crowd, deafened by the chatter of a hundred silent voices, each one connected with an item on display. I felt like an intruder. The sensation was so strong that I left, finding refuge in another, busier, room, and its soothingly dull display of fishing tackle.

As ghost stories go, this one is a bit disappointing. But ask any curator, particularly if they work in an old building, and they often have strange stories to tell. Objects that move around of their own accord; maintenance men, working late, hearing footsteps when nobody is there; unexplained disturbances on CCTV. Haunted houses are a staple of the English tourist industry and many history lovers might fantasise about a direct encounter with the past. But there is something about art history and archaeology that makes previous ages seem especially immediate. No wonder so many scholars of those disciplines have turned to writing ghost stories – chief among them M.R. (Montague Rhodes) James (1862–1936).

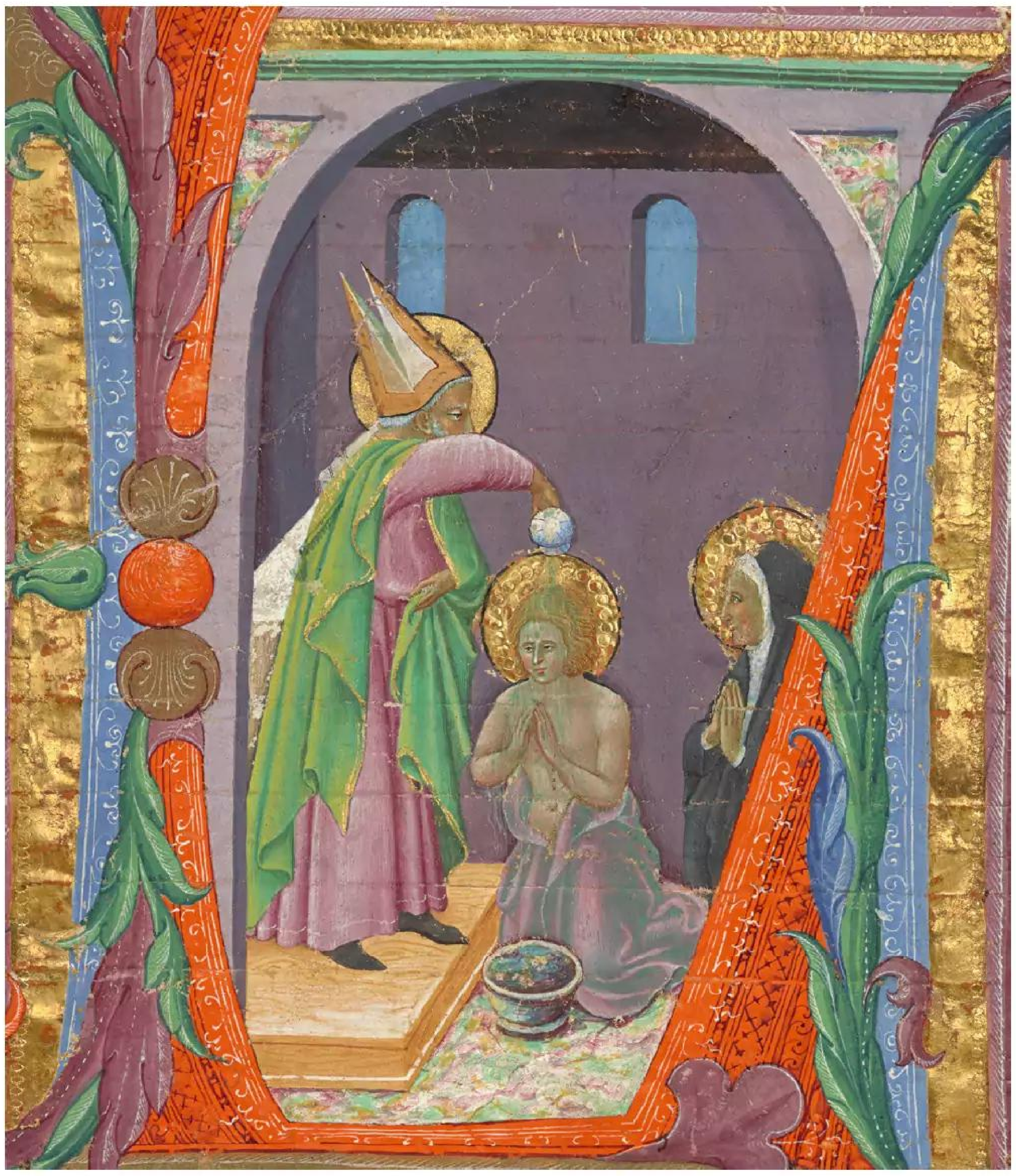
By day, James was a medievalist, making his career as director of the Fitzwilliam Museum, provost of King's College, Cambridge, and subsequently provost of Eton. His catalogues of manuscripts in the collections of college libraries are still widely consulted and in many cases unsurpassed. In the late 19th century, 'scientific' approaches to historical enquiry were gaining traction and James's trajectory set him firmly among the ranks of the professional scholar, distinct from the more amateurish 'antiquaries' of the past. Yet in 1904 he published *Ghost Stories of an Antiquary*, illustrated by his close friend James McBryde, who had died earlier that year. Originally written to be read aloud to small groups of friends and colleagues, often on Christmas Eve, these eight stories, and those that were published later, explore the less respectable side of historical studies, especially the emotional and even magical pull of objects usually studied from more sober angles.

Although the uneasy rural settings of many of the stories rightly identify James as the 'father of folk horror', many more deal with the physical remains of the past. Often he drew on his work as a medievalist. In 'Canon

Opening spread photo: © The Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge; opposite page photo: courtesy the Bavarian State Library (Cgm 48, f. 11v); this page photo: courtesy Archives Centre, King's College, Cambridge

Alberic's Scrap-Book', the main character, Dennistoun, comes into possession of a folio of fragments cannibalised from illuminated manuscripts, a situation that must have been familiar to James. Alberic's fragments, 'plundered [from] the Chapter library of St. Bertrand' in the late 17th century, prove too tempting for Dennistoun, who plans to take the album to Cambridge, for the 'Wentworth Collection' (read: the Fitzwilliam Museum). Like Alberic before him, however, he pays a terrible price for his acquisition.

There is a moralising overtone to the punishments visited, first on the album's original compiler, who mutilated manuscripts to create it, and subsequently on the modern scholar, who wishes to further dislocate the album from its home. James took Dennistoun's name from the real-life Scottish antiquarian James Dennistoun (1803–55), who spent the middle decades of the 19th century travelling around Italy collecting manuscript cuttings, some bought directly from cash-strapped monasteries. The real-life Dennistoun intended to use the resulting album as the basis for a history of Italian medieval art, but never completed it. James was no doubt aware of Dennistoun's fragments, some of which were acquired by the Victoria and Albert Museum in London after the antiquarian's death; beneath the surface of James's narrative lurks the implication that 'unprincipled' scholars can just as easily disturb or destroy the past in their efforts to preserve it – and, perhaps, that the ones who do deserve to be punished.



Cutting from a choir book, c. 1430, Master of the Osservanza (active c. 1425–50), once owned by Scottish antiquary James Dennistoun

As well as borrowing names from the recent antiquarian past, James drew on his deep knowledge of medieval texts and iconography to craft his horrors. Among Alberic's papers is a drawing, signed by Alberic himself, of King Solomon on his throne, and before the throne a terrifying, crouched figure:

> a mass of coarse, matted black hair [...] cover[ing] a body of fearful thinness, almost a skeleton, but with the muscles standing out like wires [...] hideously taloned. The eyes, touched in with a burning yellow, had intensely black pupils [...] Imagine one of the awful bird-catching spiders of South America translated into human form, and endowed with intelligence just less than human, and you will have some faint conception of the terror inspired by this appalling effigy.

James's imagined scene derives partly from his interest in the apocryphal Testament of Solomon – which claims to be Solomon's own narrative of how he built the Temple of Jerusalem with the help of enslaved demons – and partly from the author's notorious fear of spiders. However, the image James describes also recalls illustrations of Jacobus de Teramo's *Consolatio Peccatorum, Seu Processus Belial* (The Consolation of Sinners, or the Trial of Belial), written in *c.* 1382. The text imagines a tribunal between Christ and the Devil, presided over by King Solomon, with the demon Belial as the Devil's legal advocate. Popular throughout the Middle Ages, the Trial of Belial was reproduced many times, in illuminated manuscripts and early printed books, even into the 17th century. James must have been aware of the tract's iconographic tradition, which often features a ghastly demon approaching King Solomon's throne.

In 'Canon Alberic's Scrap-Book' then, as so often in James's stories, a fictive artwork – Alberic's drawing – provides clues to the appearance of a supernatural creature never fully or directly described by the narrator. Similarly, in 'Count Magnus', the scholar Wraxall encounters two menacing figures in the narrative engravings on the Count's sarcophagus: one 'strange form [...] unduly short', with 'the tentacle of a devil-fish' for an arm, the other 'a cloaked man [...] leaning on a stick'. Later on, this pair pursue Wraxall to his death, but now the description is chillingly sparse: 'both were in dark cloaks; the taller one wore a hat, the shorter a hood [...] He had seen them before'. Already half-revealed in an artwork, the horror is ready to be recognised when it emerges into the real life of the story.

In 'The Treasure of Abbot Thomas', an artwork again helps to tie up the narrative. The most horrifying moment comes when a Mr Somerton recounts his discovery of the treasure, hidden deep in a well shaft (a location revealed, incidentally, by messages in a stained-glass window). Pulling what he thinks is an old leather bag towards him in the darkness, he describes how 'it hung for an instant on the edge of the hole, then slipped forward on to my chest, and put its arms round my neck'. The reader gets little sense of the fiend's appearance until Somerton's friend points out a carving on the Italian marble well-head: 'a horrid, grotesque shape – perhaps more like a toad than anything else'. The artwork reveals things left unsaid by the narrator.

James's most famous story about a work of art is 'The Mezzotint'. The main character, Mr Williams, is tasked with buying topographical prints and drawings for the collection of the 'Ashleian Museum' (again, read: the

This page photo courtesy Getty Museum, Los Angeles; opopsite page photo: © The Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge

Fitzwilliam staff at the museum in 1887, with the then-assisting director M.R. James seated to the right of the painting.

The library of Queen Mary's Dolls' House (1924) at Windsor Castle, for which M.R. James wrote 'The Haunted Doll's House'

Photo: © Royal Collection Enterprises Limited 2025 | Royal Collection Trust

Ashmolean), and James's narrative revels in the minutiae of the acquisitions process, well known to him as director of the Fitzwilliam. He describes the arrival of a catalogue from a London dealer 'Mr J. W. Britnell' with a letter 'beg[ging] to call your attention to No. 978 in our accompanying catalogue'. This turns out to be a 'rather indifferent mezzotint' of a manor house: 'perhaps', James quips in an aside, 'the worst form of engraving known'. The mezzotint soon justifies its advertisement, however, subtly changing each time it is viewed, playing out the revengeful kidnapping of the engraver's son a century earlier. The mezzotint's tragic show occurs once and once only: at the end of the story it lies quietly in the museum's collection and, 'though carefully watched, it has never been known to change again'.

James never abandoned the idea that objects and artworks might sometimes come to life. In 1923, he reworked aspects of 'The Mezzotint' for a new story, 'The Haunted Doll's House', to be copied out into a volume not quite 4cm high, bound in vellum and included in the library of Queen Mary's Dolls' House at Windsor Castle. In the playful manuscript story, 'A Night in King's College Chapel' (not published until 1985), figures in the stained glass come alive: 'To my horror I saw [the figure of Reuben], distinctly, lower his arms (which had been raised over his head in surprise), retire to the edge of the well, and sit down on it.'

Like an actor after a show, the figure then 'produced an extraordinarily murky clay [pipe], filled it, struck a match on the stonework of the well and lit up, so that soon an odour as of the worst variety of shag stole over the sacred edifice'. The chapel comes alive with the 'perfect buzz of conversation on all sides; voices male, female and animal'. A fight breaks out between Eve and Mrs Job and the prophets from the centre lights wander over to the west window, dropping their scrolls behind them or tying them around their necks. 'They were dreadfully mixed next day in some cases,' James writes, while the ones that were tied, 'having been treated in this way persistently for three centuries, are almost entirely illegible now'.

'A Night in King's College Chapel' is a playful take on the lives of things, but in 'The Malice of Inanimate Objects', one of James's last stories, he considers those 'dreadful days, on which we have had to acknowledge with gloomy resignation that our world has turned against us':

> the world of things that do not speak or work or hold congresses and conferences. It includes such beings as the collar stud, the inkstand, the fire, the razor, and, as age increases, the extra step on the staircase which leads you either to expect or to not expect it. By these and such as these [...] the word is passed round, and the day of misery arranged'

In the end, however, the rebellion of the objects is connected to the unquiet spirit of one of the protagonist's enemies, and James concludes that perhaps 'there is something not inanimate behind the Malice of Inanimate Objects'.

Indeed, in many of James's stories, objects provide a means for the dead to reach beyond their historical moment and into the world of the living. In 'Oh, Whistle, and I'll Come to You, My Lad', a professor called Parkins

Display cases inside the Musée Comtadin-Duplessis in Carpentras, France

takes a winter holiday at 'Burnstow' on the east coast, where an archaeologist colleague has asked him to view 'the site of the Templars' preceptory'. In the ruins, Parkins discovers a whistle with the inscription: 'QUIS EST ISTE QUI VENIT' ('who is this who is coming?' – a line from the book of Isaiah). Blowing it produces a note with 'a quality of infinite distance', a sound 'that seemed to have the power [...] of forming pictures in the brain'. Parkins starts to see a lonely figure, lingering on the shore and chasing him across the sands, before finally, alone in his twin room at the hotel, he sees someone 'suddenly sit up in what he had known was an empty bed'.

In the humorous interludes that punctuate the narrative, the sinister power of the whistle is tied to questions of religious discord that were still live in James's time. One character states 'that, in Parkins's place, he should himself be careful about using a thing that had belonged to a set of Papists' (Catholics had been permitted to study at Oxbridge only since 1871). Other stories suggest James's interest in the layering of ages in the English landscape and the long history of materials: the figures of a cat, death and the Devil on 'The Stalls of Barchester Cathedral', which seem to come to life in the night, turn out to have been carved from the wood of a 'Hanging Oak', a common motif in British folklore.

But for historians of all sorts, James's most alluring (and, perhaps, most relatable) story is 'A View from a Hill'. The narrative centres on a pair of binoculars, handmade by a suspiciously successful local antiquary called Mr Baxter, which reveal the landscape as it appeared in times past. It turns out that Baxter was only too literal in realising his desire 'to look through a dead man's eyes', filling the binoculars with liquid made from boiled bones. But the dead, who 'didn't like having their bones boiled', finally come to carry Baxter off 'whither he would not'. An unfortunate end for Baxter, but what greater fantasy for students of the past than seeing history first-hand? Historians of all kinds – but especially art historians – devote their lives, by different means, to exactly this cause. What else is Michael Baxandall's famous concept of the 'period eye' – his attempt to recover the culturally shaped modes of vision specific to certain times and places – than a more respectable attempt to look through dead men's eyes?

James was writing at a time when professional historians were anxious to distance their quasi-scientific approaches from the whimsical studies of antiquaries. But his stories reveal that he understood only too well what many students of art and history feel when faced with the remains of the past. The creeping feeling that we are never quite alone with the objects we study, that we are always somehow accompanied by the people who once made, viewed and used them, and that their intentions and desires are still deeply embedded in the objects that survive them. Drawing out these intentions, accounting for the humanity of the long dead, is a task that can cause the scholar considerable anxiety – accompanied or not by the fear that, should we get it wrong, the dead will find a way to return, to put us right.

Christina J. Faraday is an affiliated lecturer in history of art at the University of Cambridge and author of The Story of Tudor Art *(Head of Zeus).*

Photo: Art Images via Getty Images

The Return of Raphael

A Lost Masterpiece Inspires a New Generation

When Raphael's *Portrait of a Young Man* disappeared from Kraków's Princes Czartoryski Museum during the Second World War, it left behind one of art history's most haunting absences – an empty frame and a mystery that endures to this day. Eighty years later, that void has become a source of inspiration rather than loss.

The Return of Raphael competition invited artists from around the world to create self-portraits inspired by the missing masterpiece using the innovative Glaze app, which allows users to create oil paintings digitally. The response was extraordinary: 1,250 entries from participants aged seven to seventy-seven, each reimagining Raphael's vision through contemporary eyes.

The initiative aims to nurture a lasting appreciation for art among future generations, blending classical inspiration with digital innovation. By encouraging artists to paint themselves in dialogue with Raphael, the competition revives the Renaissance practice of close observation and introspection – the art of truly seeing.

An international jury selected the winners. The judges were Brett Renfer (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York), Candida Lodovica de Angelis Corvi (Colnaghi Foundation), Dean Phelus (American Alliance of Museums), Klaudia Ofwona Draber (Finnish Cultural Institute in New York; Sotheby's Institute of Art, New York), and Tomasz Ostrowski (National Museum in Kraków).

The works of the finalists and winners will be exhibited from 8 December 2025 at the Princes Czartoryski Museum (a branch of the National Museum in Kraków), displayed near Leonardo da Vinci's *Lady with an Ermine* – another jewel of the collection that was once imperilled by war. In the same galleries that still await the return of Raphael's portrait, where the work's original frame still hangs empty, new self-portraits will now take their place in conversation with the Renaissance.

Through Glaze, technology becomes a bridge across centuries, allowing Raphael's spirit, and the curiosity it inspires, to live again.

Well of Art

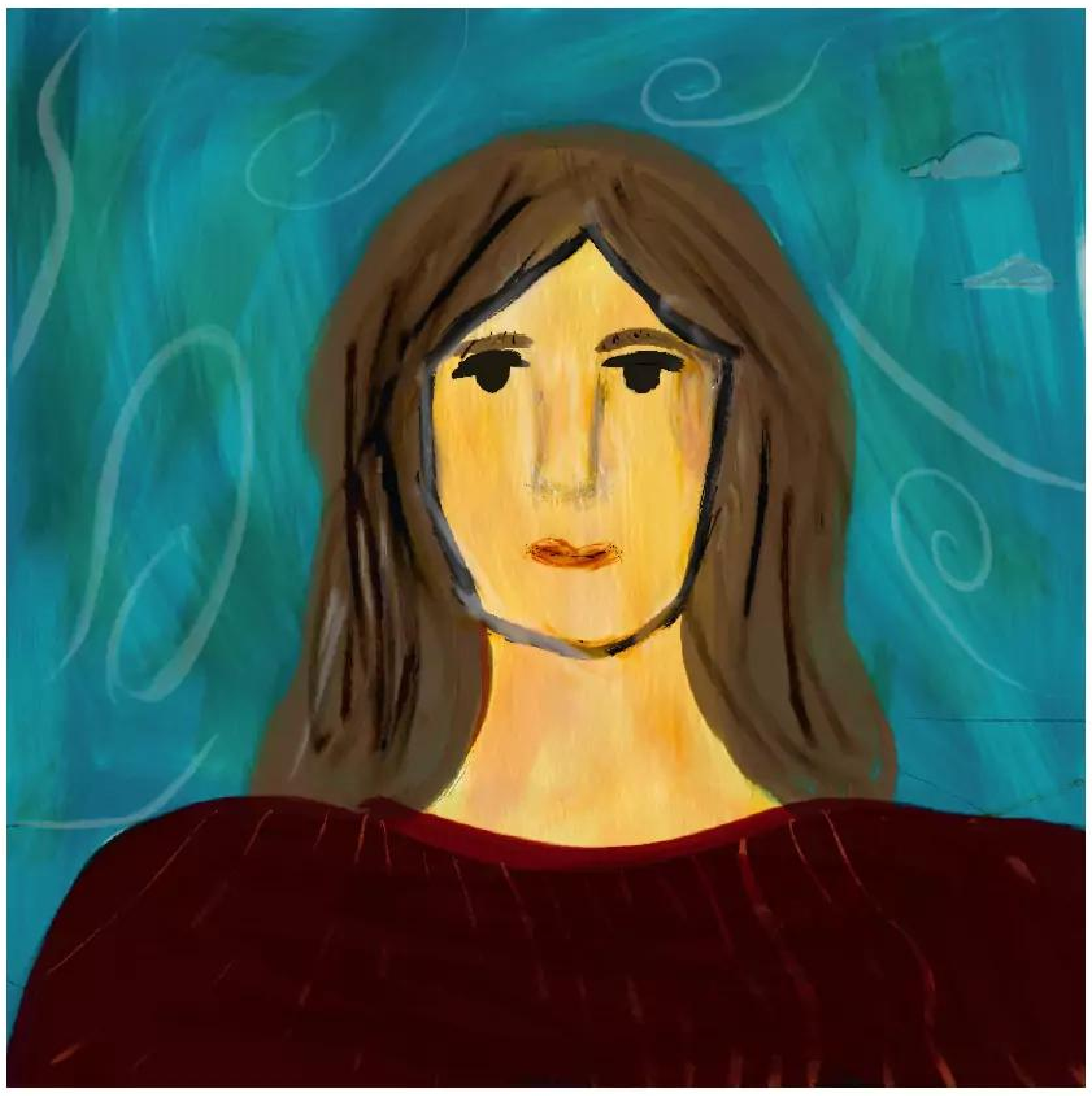
Muzeum
Narodowe
w Krakowie

MUZEUM KSIĄŻĄT
CZARTORYSKICH

Ewa Sołowow
Foundation

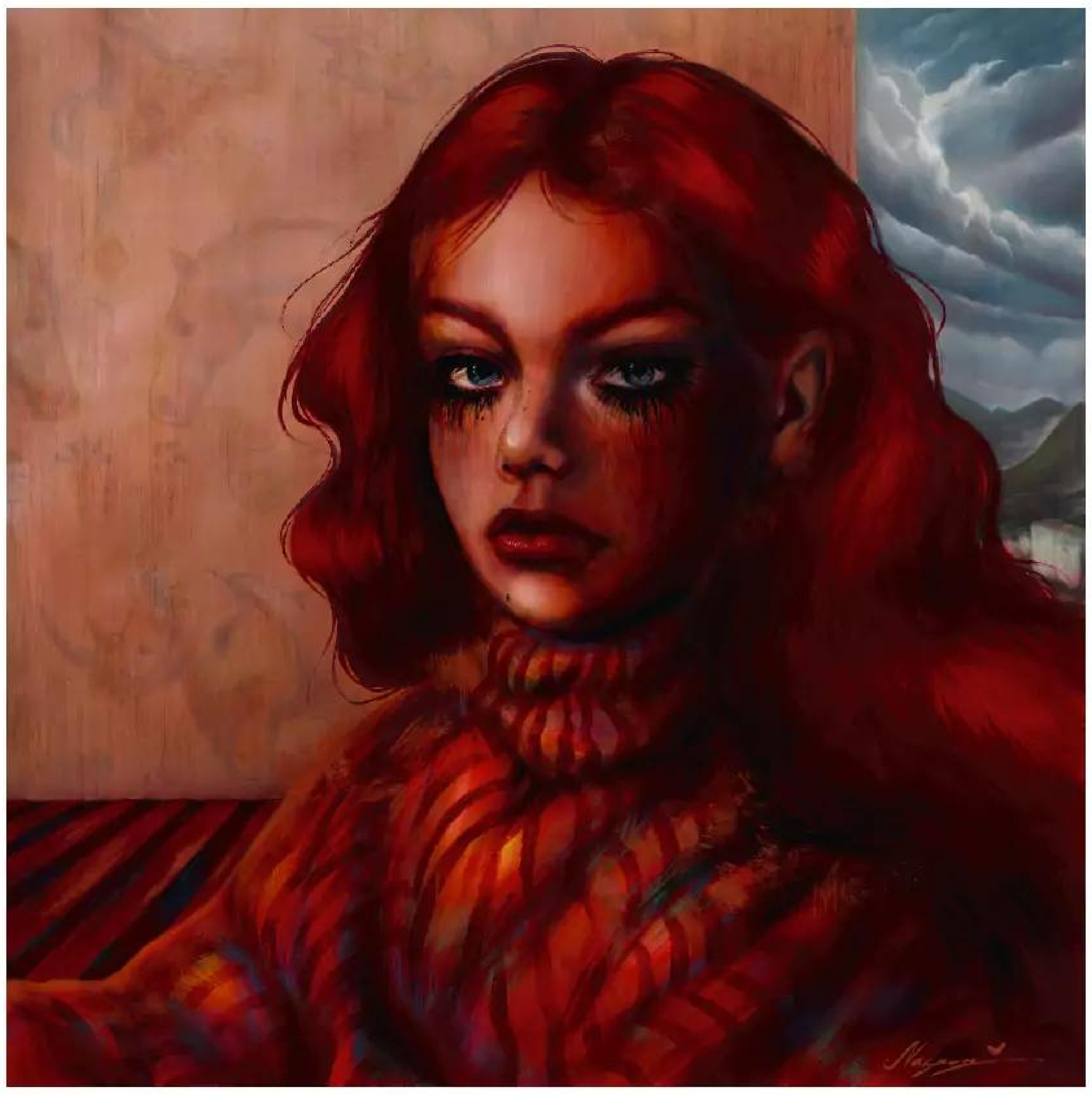
Winners

1st Edition of the Glaze Painting Competition



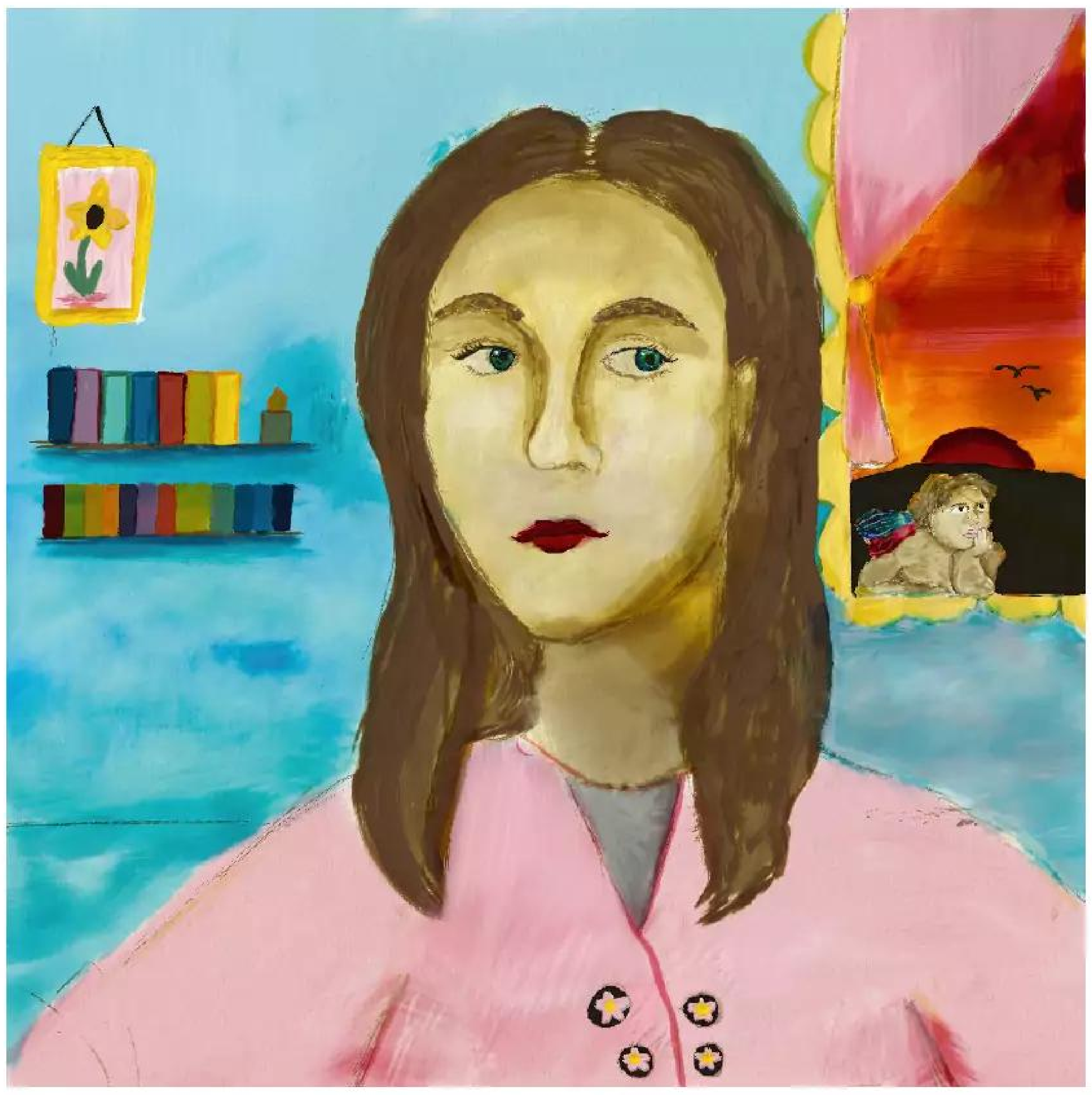
Lara Ciftcioglu, 10 years old
Winner (ages 7–10)

'There's something deeply evocative about this work. The way she handled the background gives it an intangible, almost Alex Katz–like quality.' *Brett Renfer*



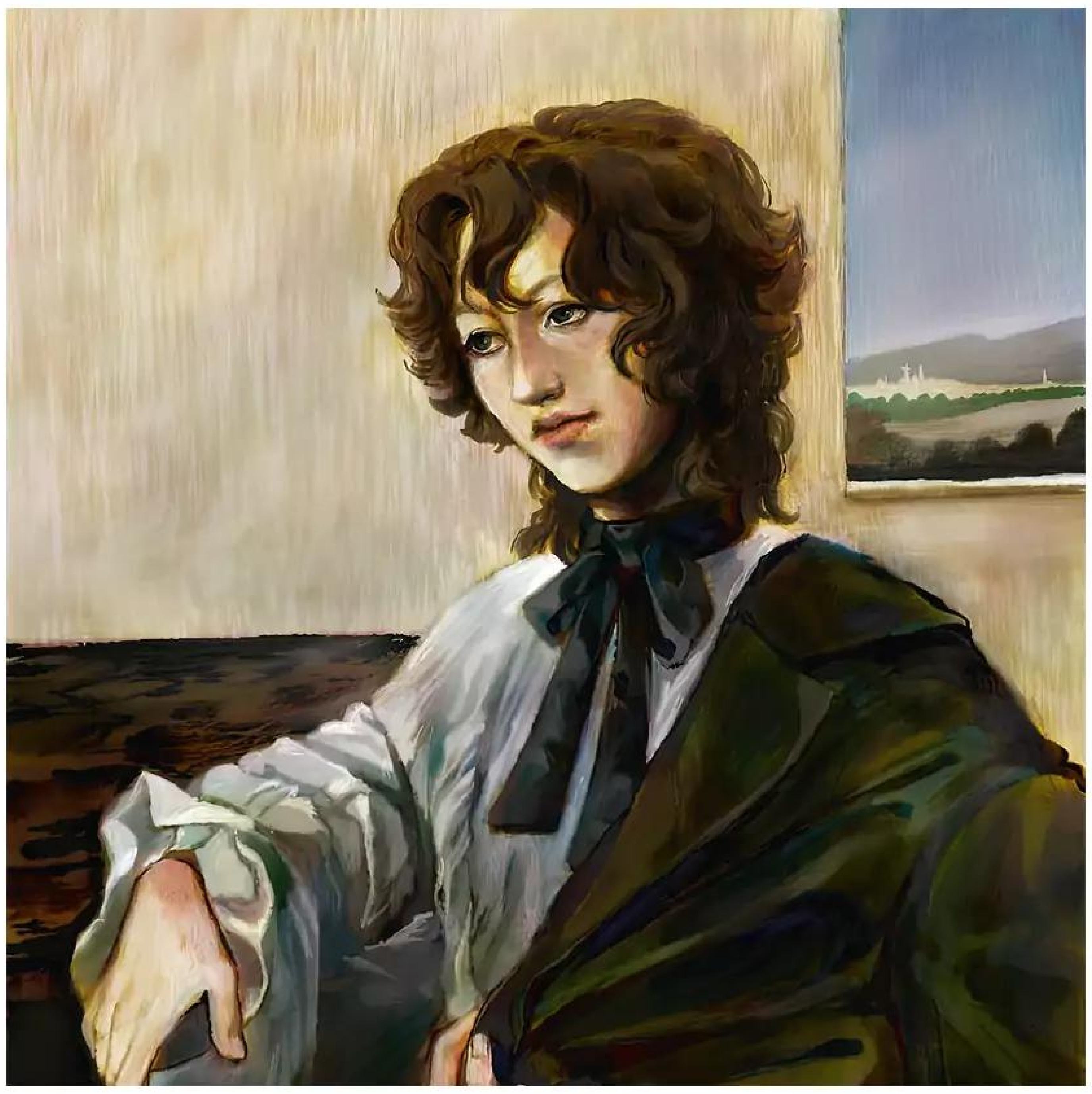
Anastasiya Tsvilik, 16 years old
Winner (ages 15–18)

'You simply can't fail to appreciate what this young artist has achieved. It's stunning – especially the sky and clouds. The amount of work she's put into this is remarkable. It's a very serious take on the subject.' *Tomasz Ostrowski*



Hanna Boguszewska, 11 years old
Winner (ages 11–14)

'This work perfectly captures Raphael's sensibility – the colour harmony is just perfect.' *Klaudia Ofwona Draber*



Sofia Labanava, 19 years old
Winner (age 19+)

'It's not just the face – the treatment of the curls in the hair, the folds of the clothing – everything comes together in a beautifully balanced composition.' *Dean Phelus*

Painted in GLAZE

OLD MASTERS
SCULPTURE

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La Chasse and *La Pêche*
Original models created for the Manufacture de Sèvres, 1758

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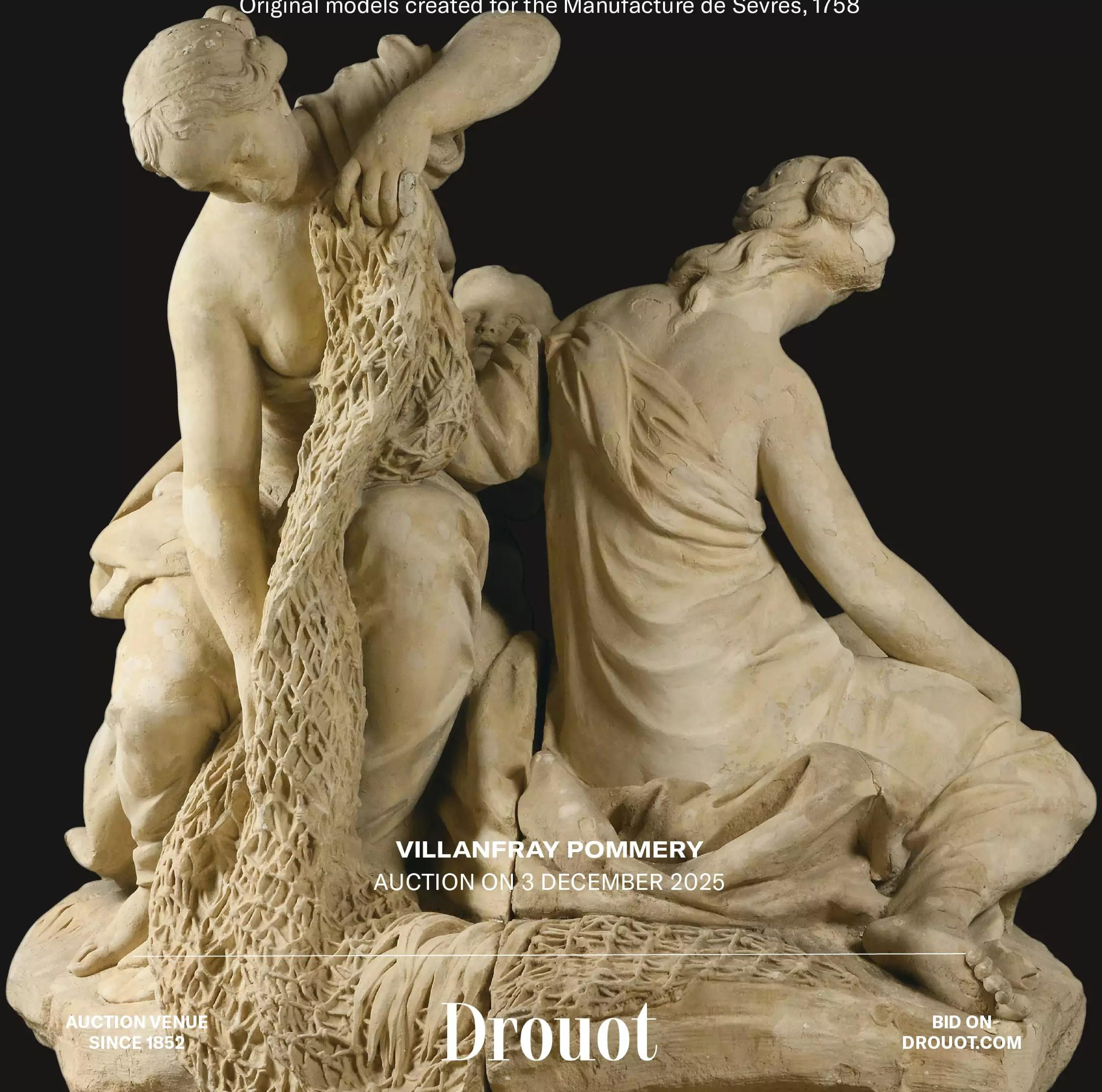

Fair game

As more fairs open in cities across the Middle East, such as Doha, there are questions as to whether there are enough collectors to sustain them

A spate of new fairs suggests 'fairtigue' is over, but perhaps we should slow down, says **JANE MORRIS**

Among the chit-chat this autumn, including the unexpected success of Frieze London and Art Basel Paris, an item of consequential news emerged. Days before its opening in London, Frieze announced it would launch an edition in Abu Dhabi in November 2026 – hot on the heels of Art Basel, which is opening in Qatar in February 2026. As we reported in June, much attention is being paid to the Gulf by the art market.

Art Basel Qatar is an entirely new fair while Frieze Abu Dhabi is taking over, expanding and internationalising Abu Dhabi Art, until now a small regional brand. They join Art Dubai, established in 2007, and Art Week Riyadh in Saudi Arabia, which is expected to hold its second edition in April 2026.

This rapid expansion was not something anyone would have predicted, in the Gulf or elsewhere. In the aftermath of the pandemic, which forced commercial galleries and art fairs to close and drove art sales online, gallerists regularly declared they would in future go to fewer fairs citing rising costs. Collectors complained of 'fairtigue', caused by the enormous growth in the international calendar of events since the early 2000s.

Despite the wealth, the pandemic was tough for galleries in the Gulf too. Sunny Rahbar, co-founder of pioneering Dubai gallery The Third Line, which celebrates its 20th anniversary this year, recalls: 'It was as hard as the financial crash [of 2008/09]. We almost decided to cut our losses and close. But then we thought: "We've spent 15 years building this."' Now she says: 'We are in a position to pick and choose what we do, but I don't think we'll be going back to doing seven fairs a year.'

So why the interest in the Gulf? In a word: money. The economy of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) – Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) – is booming. GDP is predicted to grow by around 4.4 per cent in 2026, while much of the world, especially Europe, stagnates.

This is partly driven by the Gulf's huge oil reserves but also state-driven economic diversification. This includes renewable energy, artificial intelligence (AI) and other technologies, tourism and finance. According to the World Economic Forum, Dubai is becoming a global financial hub, with the number of companies operating in banking and capital markets up by 20 per cent in the first half of this year.

The UAE and other GCC countries are also becoming a haven for the wealthy thanks to generous 'golden visa' schemes and their reputation for safety. 'The change is extraordinary,' Rahbar says. 'Dubai is so busy, so many people are moving here.'

Meanwhile, the Gulf states have been heavily exercising their 'soft power'. This includes huge investment in cultural infrastructure, sports and leisure. For some, this represents an opening-up of the region's closed, traditional and deeply religious societies. For others it is a troubling example of arts- and sportswashing of what continues to be the GCC's poor human-rights records.

Qatar's most obvious use of soft power was its hosting of the World Cup in 2022. It has also opened six museums since 2008, including 3-2-1 Qatar Olympic and Sports Museum and a new one devoted to the Indian modernist M.F. Husain. Plans for others include the modern and contemporary Art Mill Museum.

Photo: UCG/Getty Images

This year's edition of Art Basel Paris drew large numbers of visitors, but the presence of luxury brands risks alienating collectors

Courtesy Art Basel

Abu Dhabi investment funds own Manchester City Football Club, stakes in Formula 1 and a large slice of Sotheby's. Abu Dhabi's new museums include the Louvre Abu Dhabi, the Zayed National Museum and the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi, which will open in 2026. Dubai has focused on luxury tourism and commerce but announced last month it will construct a Tadao Ando-designed contemporary art museum, the Dubai Museum of Art.

Saudi Arabia, meanwhile, is in overdrive, with investments ranging across football, golf, cricket, horse-racing, motorsport and tennis, not to mention the vast Neom desert city development (even in its reduced state) and the Wadi AlFann sculpture park as part of the massive AlUla heritage and tourism project.

How much all of this has cost is unknown – the Gulf regimes are autocratic monarchies, not democracies, and little information is in the public domain – but it is certainly many billions. Adding art fairs, which attract wealthy elites, arts professionals with 'cultural capital' and international press coverage to the mix makes sense – especially as all the new Gulf museums are busy buying art as well. The fairs, not surprisingly, are more than willing partners in this enterprise.

It has been an open secret, for example, that MCH Group, the Swiss owner of Art Basel, has been looking to grow its income streams since it made losses of CHF72m (£60m) in 2020. The same year it sold a large stake to Lupa Systems, a private investment firm owned by Rupert Murdoch's son James. Since 2021 it has launched a new edition in Paris, signed a deal to help organise Art Week Tokyo in Japan (with government and private funding) and has now announced the fair in Qatar.

Frieze has also grown rapidly since sports and entertainment company Endeavor bought a majority stake in 2016. Since 2019 it has opened editions in Los Angeles and Seoul, as well as taking over the management of the Armory Show in New York and Expo Chicago. Only a few weeks after it was taken into new ownership in October – led by former Endeavor chief executive Ari Emanuel – it signed the Abu Dhabi deal.

But these developments are happening against a background of increasingly precarious times for art fairs. When Ernst Beyeler set up Art Basel in 1970 with two fellow art dealers, there were few other fairs. By 2019 the number of fairs around the world had ballooned to 407, according to research firm Arts Economics.

But this proved to be 'peak art fair'. Between 2020 and 2023 the cold winds blowing through the art market caused 129 to fold, including MCH Group's Masterpiece (which held its last edition in London in 2022) and Art Beijing, which had run since 2006. A further 31 went in 2024. The long-established The Art Show in New York, Nada's Paris edition, Taipei Dangdai and the Eye of the Collector were among the casualties announced this year. Some of these, possibly euphemistically, describe themselves as 'on pause'.

The problem is that art fairs are challenging businesses to run. Margins are tight and it is often forgotten that the fairs' principal clients are galleries, most of which are feeling the effect of the art-market downturn, not wealthy collectors.

'We have to deliver to [the galleries] or they will stop paying our fees,' says Simon Fox, chief executive of Frieze. These can range from £10,000 for an emerging gallery to £70,000 for a large, blue-chip stand. 'Unfortunately, fees are high because fairs are expensive to stage and costs have risen more than inflation.' He says the fair has worked hard to mitigate this with below-inflation price increases, funded in part by new sponsorship deals.

Meanwhile, fairs have year-round costs – staff, offices, marketing expenses, collector and gallery relations – but only a one-week opportunity, if they only have one annual edition, to bring money in. Given these hard realities, the eagerness of investors to still get involved in art-fair businesses is surprising.

In a podcast in 2023, Murdoch explained why he had invested in MCH Group. 'Formula 1 is probably the best example,' he told Tim Schneider, founder of the Gray Market newsletter. 'Where F1 sets down, there's a huge circus: different events, and people coming from all over, and then they pick up and go

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Adriaen van Salm (Delfshaven 1660/1665–1720), The Battle of Malaga. Estimate: € 55 000–73 000. **A pair of Louis XIV three-branch wall-lights** attributed to André-Charles Boulle, circa 1715. Estimate: € 91 000–110 000. **A Swedish Gustavian chest of drawers** by Jonas Hultstén. Estimate: € 11 500–13 500. **A Chinese Export Famille-Rose Punch Bowl.** Estimate: € 2 700–3 700. **Selected silver** from The Jan Ribbhagen Collection. **The Fabergé Turkmen Eagle Göl Group II carpet**, early 19th century, c. 258 x 185 cm, Estimate: € 18 200–20 500.

Catalogue Online November 27
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auctionet

The art fair Taipei Dangdai, launched in Taiwan in 2019, is on hold, with organisers undertaking 'a close examination of the model, timing, scale and format of any future activities'

Courtesy: Taipei Dangdai

to the next city. It occurred to me that that ability to convene a broader community, not just the superfans, could be really lucrative.' He had seen an opportunity in Art Basel, he said, because it was a similar proposition 'in the cultural space'.

It's a plan regarded with scepticism by some. The more art fairs become luxury experiences, the more likely they are to forget their primary purpose, says Alain Servais, a Belgian financier and art collector. 'Formula 1 is the sort of event that gathers tons of people, spending tons of money, tons of broadcasting rights, tons of everything,' he says. 'The danger is that the art ends up as a sort of excuse, in the same way that there are people who don't care at all about the motor-racing. They are just there with their backs to the track, being seen and drinking champagne.'

These kinds of people, he argues, are no use for the galleries at an art fair. That is probably one of the reasons why Art Basel hastily introduced an extra 'ultra-VIP' day before the official start of this year's Paris fair, after grumblings that the fair was full of fashionistas.

Galleries, meanwhile, say their reasons for doing fairs are prosaic: they are expensive but generate leads and sales. While rent and salaries make up two-thirds of most galleries' operating costs, around half of the rest is spent on stand fees, shipping works of art, travel and art-fair costs. But around a third of all gallery sales come from art fairs, according to Arts Economics. This may explain why Art Basel says that applications for its Qatar edition's 87 slots were heavily over-subscribed.

'We all prefer our galleries [to fairs], where we can control the overall setting,' says Thaddaeus Ropac. He has galleries in five cities and exhibits at 16 international fairs including next year in Doha. 'But fairs have become crucial to make contact with large numbers of people and for visitors to discover new art.' They work best, he adds, when they attract people from a different region. 'I don't travel all the way to do a fair in say, Shanghai, to meet everyone I know from New York or Berlin.'

What all this means for the art fairs in the Gulf remains to be seen. 'The big question is whether new collectors will emerge in the wider Gulf region [to sustain] them,' says Elie Khouri, a businessman and Dubai-based art collector.

In the first couple of years, international collectors will probably come, he believes, 'and the governments will pitch in and buy, like they did in the early days of Art Dubai'. But for now, there are few regional collectors. 'In the UAE we are more like a $150m art market,' he says. 'That's a couple of big paintings at a top auction.'

Rachel Lehmann, co-founder of Lehmann Maupin, which has galleries in London, New York, Hong Kong and Seoul, says that she was happy to have been accepted by Art Basel Qatar, 'especially as we heard there had been hundreds of applications'. But she is strict about limiting art fairs in future – and says this is a practical business decision: 'Art Basel has made it easy for us in Qatar. The stands are a fraction of the price of a regular Art Basel booth.'

Others are even less enthusiastic about further art-fair expansion. 'The whole idea that everything in the art world has to perpetually accelerate and grow is anathema,' says Stuart Shave, who founded Modern Art in London in 1998. 'These are not the values of my artists, or their ideas of what art and the art world is for.'

Shave does only four art fairs a year – Frieze London and Art Basel in Basel, Hong Kong and Paris. 'There's too much "presenteeism", being at every fair, every art world event. There's a sort of doom spiral in some of the press about the art market, but maybe things are starting to find their original form, smaller, more thoughtful and more authentic.'

The first art fair, Art Cologne, was established as recently as 1967. Fairs have since become an integral part of the art market landscape, and as long as they add up financially for galleries and encourage people to buy art they will retain an important role. But the fact that so many have recently disappeared is less a sign of a market in crisis and more an indication of over-extension and too much hype: in fact, a much-needed correction.

Jane Morris is an independent writer, editor and commentator.

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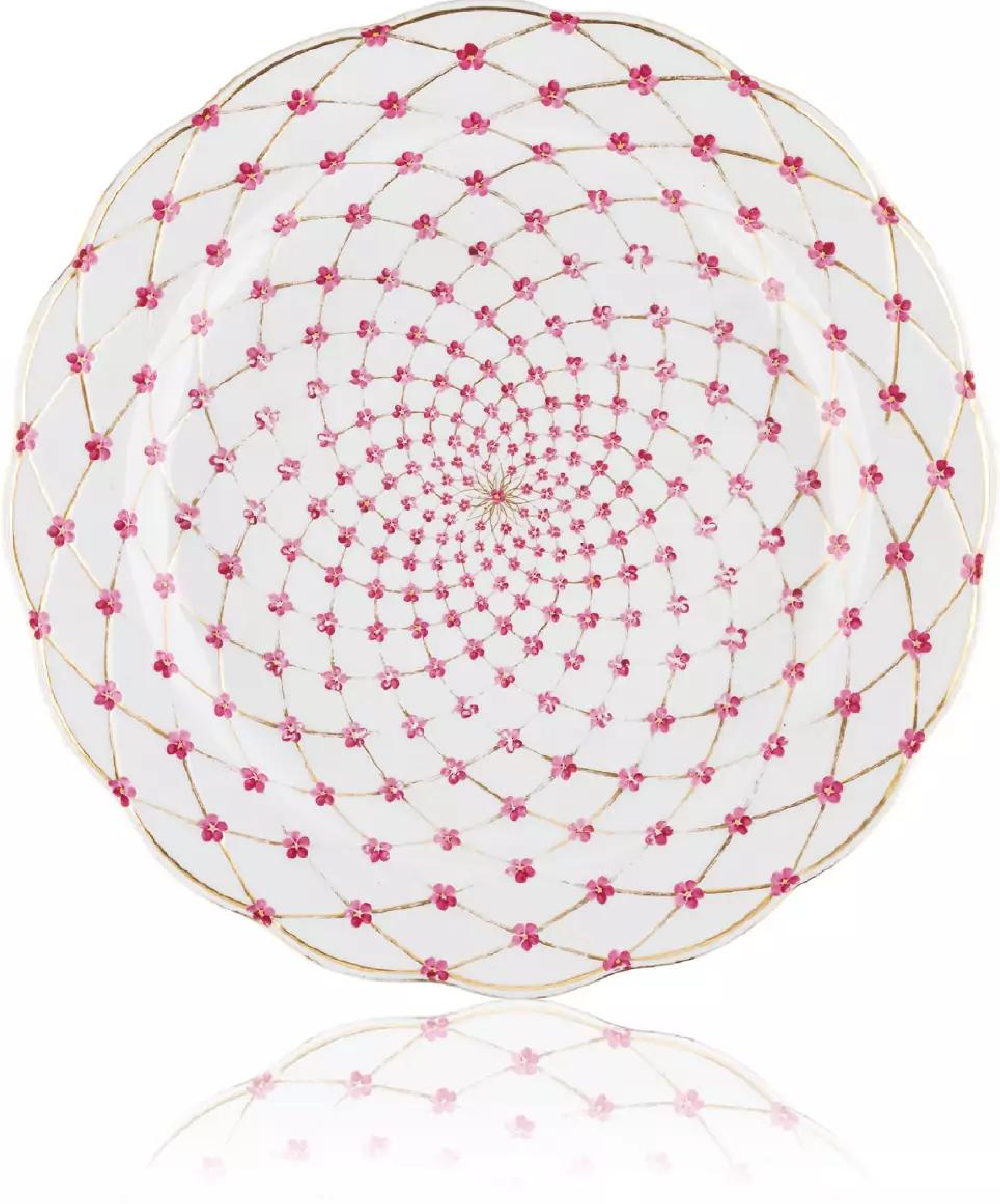

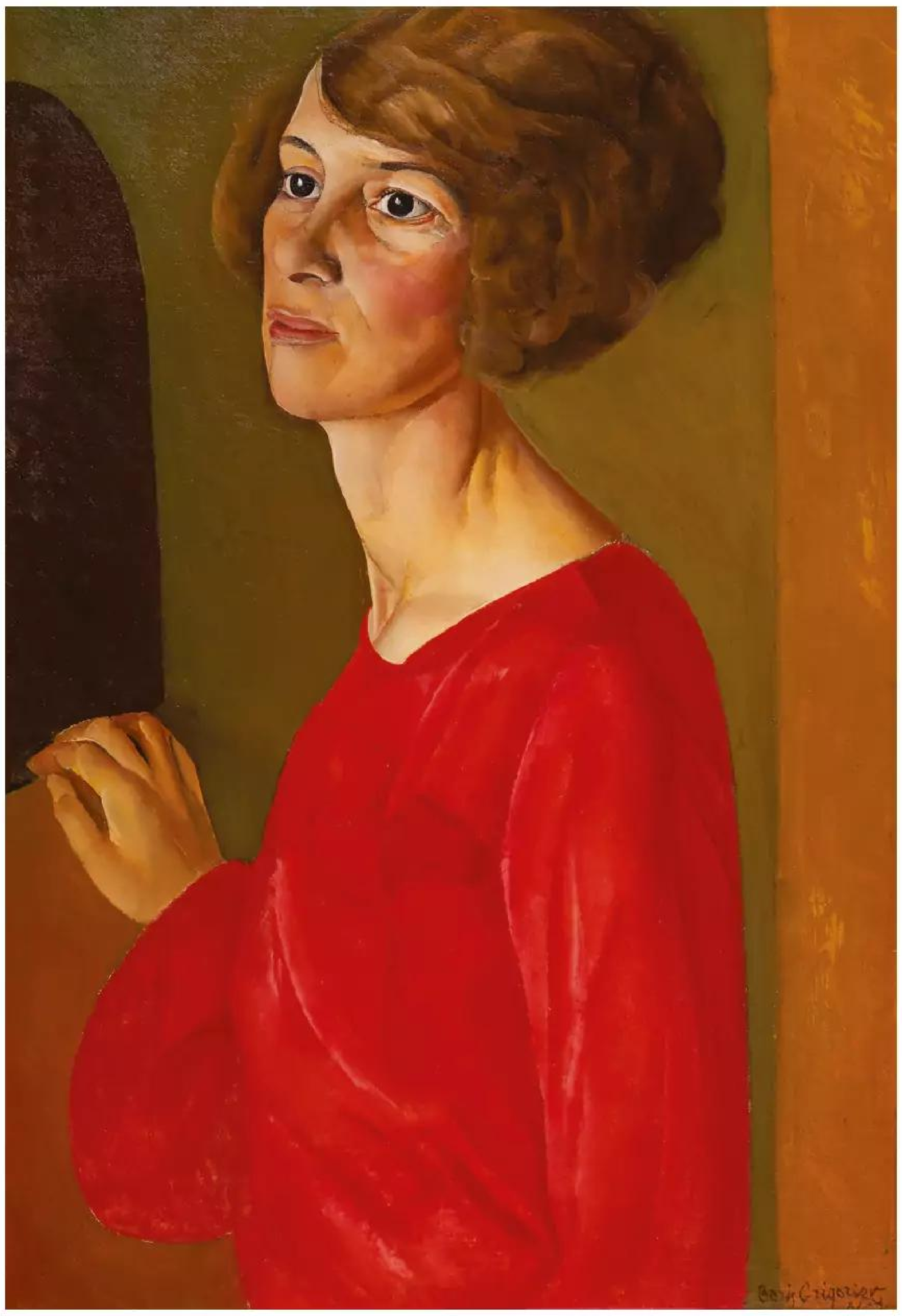

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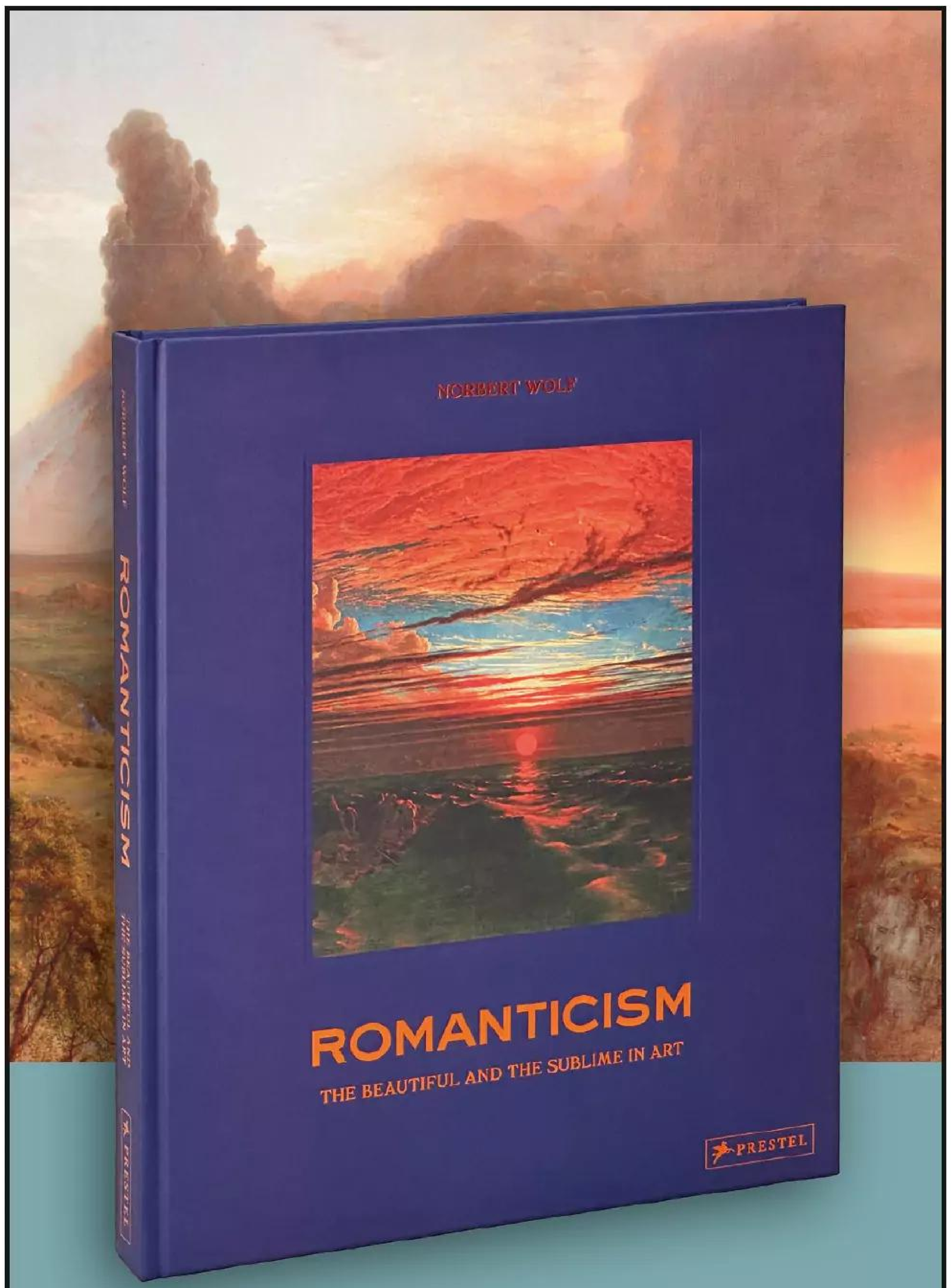

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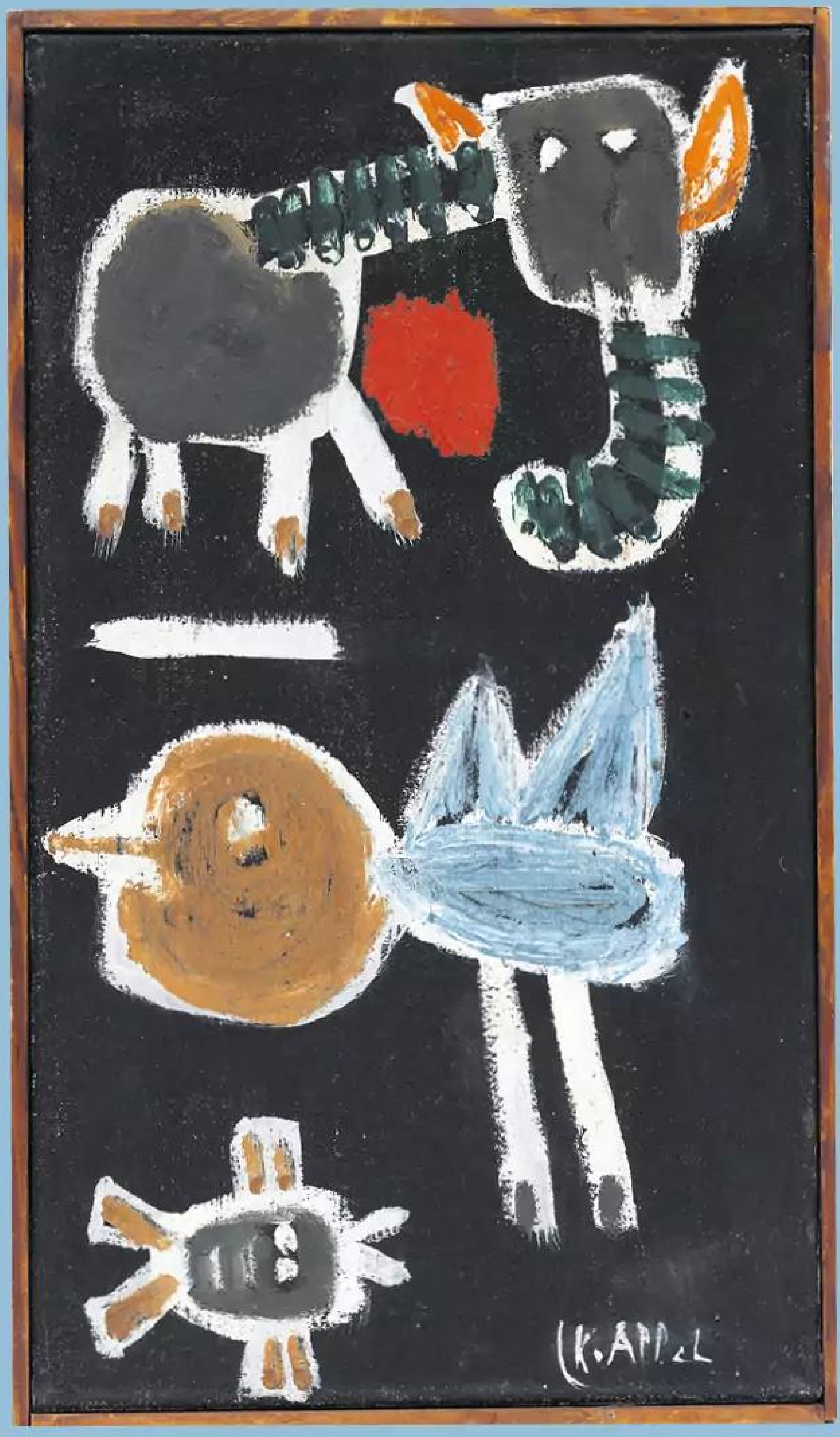

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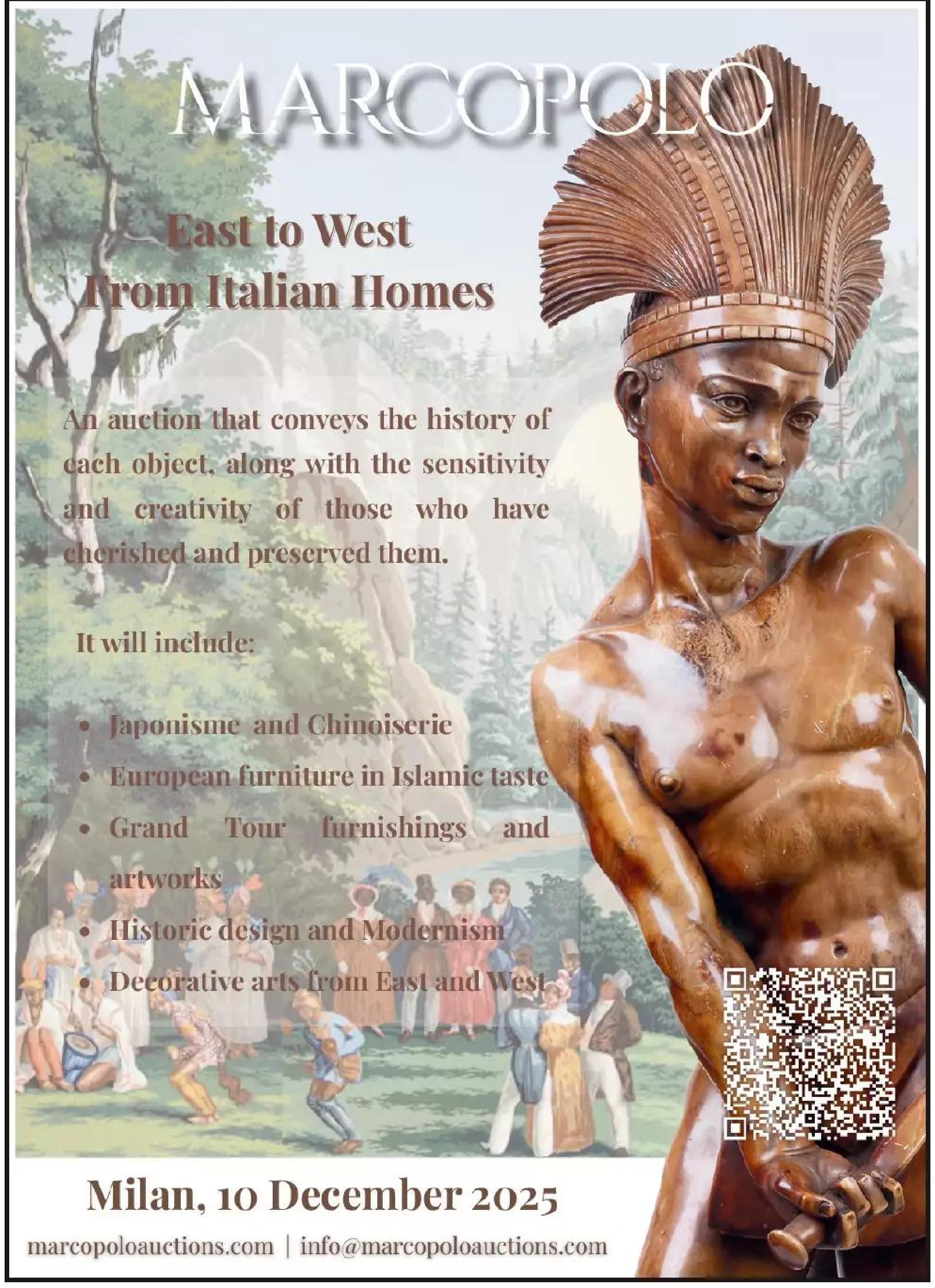

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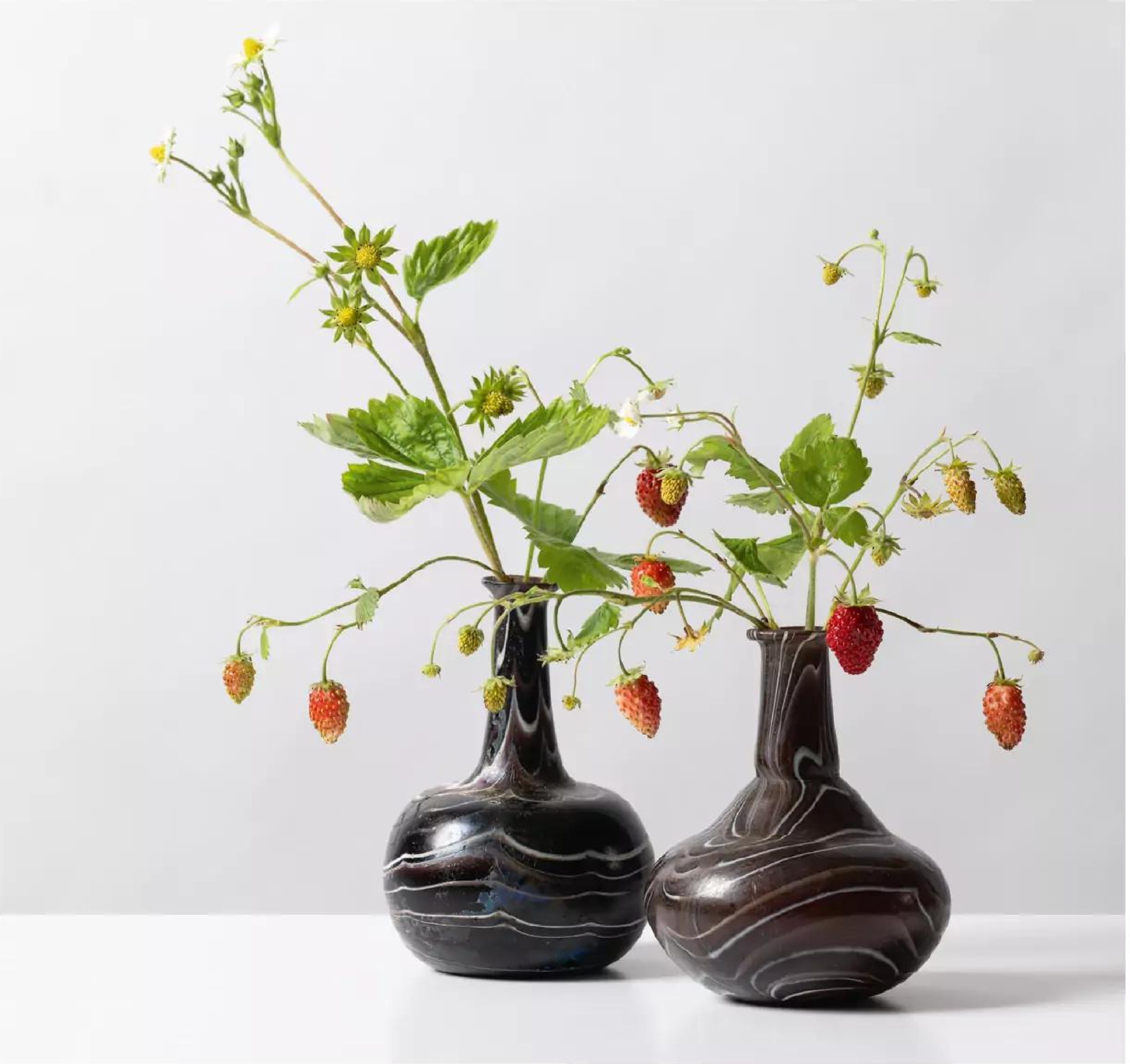


Two Roman marbled glass bottles (both 1st century AD) in a floral display at Charles Ede gallery. The bottle on the left is available for £12,000; the bottle on the right sold (listed for £18,000)

Courtesy Charles Ede

Roman glass has a clear appeal for collectors, writes **EMMA CRICHTON-MILLER**

On 26 June, London-based Charles Ede gallery mounted a spectacular exhibition as part of the one-day pop-up art fair Studiolo, held in St James's grand Spencer House. In a version of the show that opened a month earlier in the gallery's space in Mayfair, this was a collaboration with florist Shane Connolly, who, along with directors Charis Tyndall and Martin Clist, arranged on a high plinth a multi-coloured array of Roman glass, with many vessels holding elegant floral sprays. The gallery then repeated the stunt at Frieze Masters. By November, only 30 of 180 pieces, priced between £500 and £18,000, remained unsold.

Glass as a material dates back to at least the second millennium BC in Mesopotamia and Egypt. Glass beads were widespread and core-formed glass vessels were luxury items, the shapes created by heating ropes of glass over a sand and clay form, with sometimes elaborate contrastingly coloured decorative threads smoothed into the hot surface, and handles and feet added. In the first millennium BC, the Greeks and Phoenicians developed glass technologies further, including 'slumping' viscous glass over a mould and cutting bunched canes of glass cross-ways to produce mosaic-like *millefiori* decoration. All these techniques the Romans inherited from the eastern Mediterranean in the early days of the Republic. They added an interest in refining new types of monochrome and colourless tablewares. Other specialisms include the extremely rare and sought-after 'cage-cups' or *diatreta*, dated to the fourth century AD – tours de force of technique, consisting of an inner beaker and an outer decorative cage held by short stems. One of the few in private hands, the Constable-Maxwell cage-cup, achieved the auction record for a piece of ancient glass at Bonhams in London in 2004 when it fetched £2.6m against an estimate of £2m – it had twice before broken the record, in 1979 and 1986. This 'cup', once used as a lamp, was carved from a solid piece of glass in the third century AD.

What marked the Roman era, however, was the discovery of glass-blowing around the first century BC, near the Phoenician city of Sidon in what is now Syria. Symmetrical, light vessels in many colours could be created at speed and at scale, and the technology spread throughout the Roman Empire. The majority of pieces were feather-light vessels, used for oils, perfumes, ointments and other liquids. The prevailing colour is a 'natural' pale green-blue, depending upon the sand used to make the glass. Adding manganese oxide to the sand turns the glass a purple-aubergine colour; lead makes it yellow; cobalt oxide deep blue; while antimony oxide makes it colourless. Eye-catching vessels were traded throughout Europe and eastwards – Roman glass has been found in tombs in China.

These vessels were usually less expensive than their contents. But those that have survived have found a new value, especially where the soil has reacted with the surface of the glass to create a particular form of patina known as iridescence. Tyndall says: 'People love the iridescent pieces. Each one is unique. But there are people who prefer the squeaky-clean glass pieces, which look as pure as they would have to the Romans.' While trading in Roman glass must comply with the 1972 UNESCO World Heritage Convention, as a category it occupies an anomalous position: it is not uncommon, so the value of an individual piece tends to be comparatively small – not worth the effort of rescuing and forging false paperwork for export; at the same time, provenance is hard to establish. Tyndall explains that at Charles Ede they use comparative examples in museum collections to offer provenances, but most collectors are not preoccupied with the exact origins of the pieces. She suggests that there are plenty of fakes around but that any reputable dealer can tell the difference, and it is almost impossible to replicate iridescence.

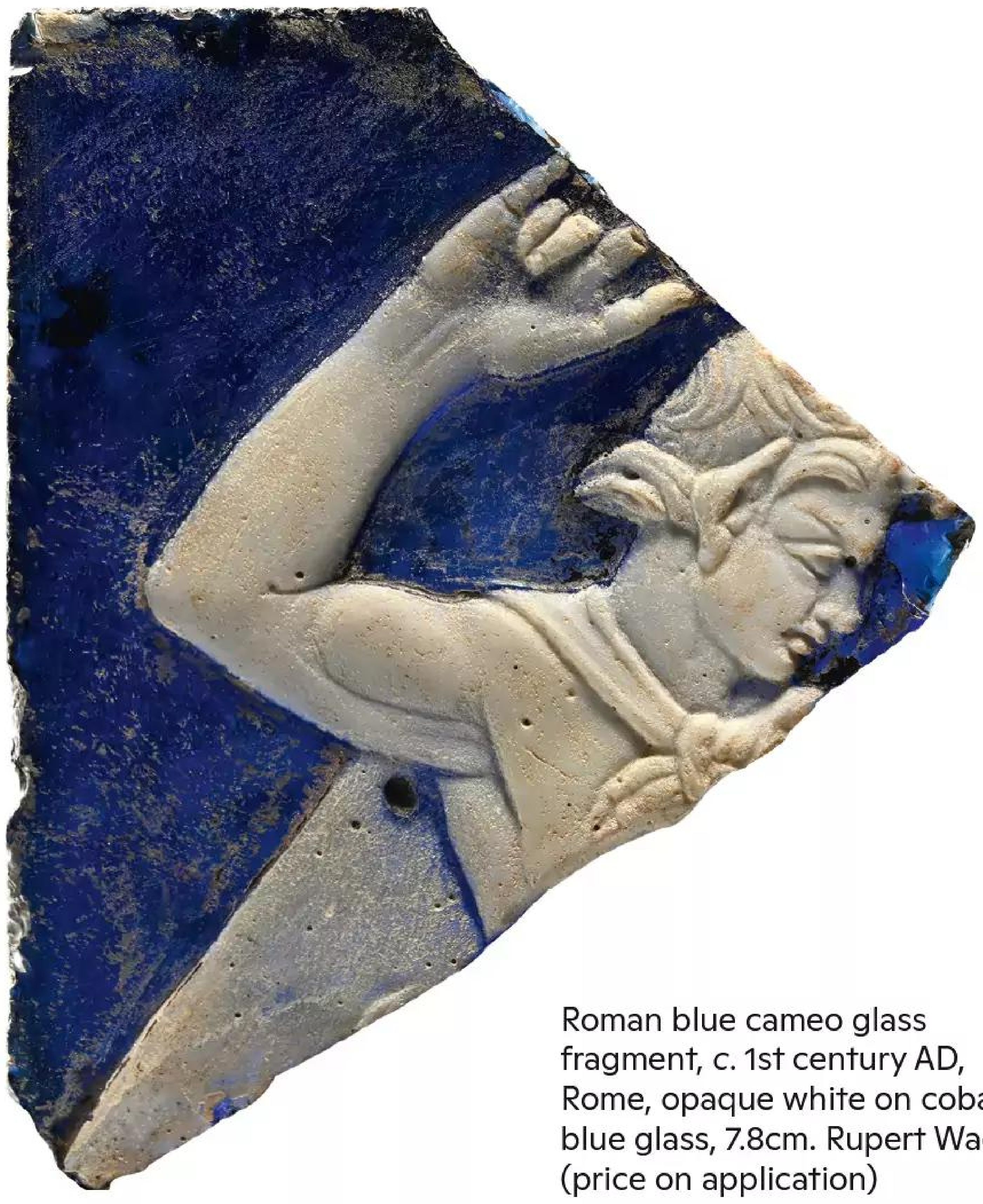
There was always a small specialist market, Tyndall says. 'Then after 2010 the market dipped dramatically. Fewer pieces came on the market as people became more concerned about provenance.' She began acquiring in 2020: 'I bought one piece for £1,000 that had been acquired from Sotheby's in 1999 for £10,000 […] People don't want 100 or 200 pieces any more. We used to sell a lot of pieces to a few people. Now we sell a few to a lot.' Collectors today are looking for 'rarity of form and colour, and the aesthetic quality of the piece.' According to Joanna van der Lande, senior consultant in antiquities at Bonhams, 'We are seeing a new generation of collectors emerging who are drawn to collecting these beautiful and fragile antiquities, while glass from [important] earlier collections has a particular premium.' This month, Bonhams will offer the exceptional Schefler Collection, begun in the late 1960s, in the Antiquities live sale (4 December), as well as the Classics Online sale (until 10 December). The collection includes a Roman fused mosaic and blown amphora of green with red, yellow and white glass from the early 1st century AD (estimate £6,000-8,000).

The Amsterdam-based dealer Mieke Zilverberg confirms a marginal recovery in the market: 'In the 1980s and 1990s there was a lot of interest in Roman glass. Then it fell away.' However, 'For the last 10 years it has climbed back up, although the implementation of the post-Brexit trade rules has dimmed interest from the UK.' It is hard to source the very rare pieces at fairs today. Mould-blown janiform sprinklers, with their double heads, are the most attractive to collectors: 'They may be from the third century but they look edgy today.'

The master of mould-blown glass, Ennion, worked in the first half of the first century AD, and today signed pieces by him are highly sought-after. The Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Corning Museum of Glass held a joint exhibition of his work in 2014–15. At Christie's London in 2016 a first-century AD Roman pale purple glass Ajax *amphoriskos* – mould-blown, the oval body decorated with two scenes from the mythological cycle of Ajax, with iridescence – sold for £74,500. Although this was unsigned, it had been included in an exhibition at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem as part of 'Made by Ennion: Ancient Glass Treasures from the Shlomo Moussaieff Collection', illustrating the power of association as well as the effect on value of a noted provenance.

Randall Hixenbaugh set up his antiquities gallery in New York 20 years ago. Roman glass was an attractive part of the inventory from the start: 'I have been able to purchase large collections in New York – many people brought Roman glass back from Israel.' Hixenbaugh agrees with Tyndall that today's collectors buy far fewer pieces, focusing on the most interesting: 'What was valuable in antiquity is what is valuable today: varying colour, marbling, intricate handles, forms that would have been impressive at the time.' This means, as Hannah Solomon, head of Christie's antiquities department in New York suggests, that while 'prices have come down significantly, as seen with the sale of some of these encyclopaedic collections, including that of John F. Fort (2016) and Estate of Jack and Jane Weprin (2022/23), there is still appreciation for more technically sophisticated styles and manufacturing.' She cites a roman mould-blown cobalt blue glass globular bowl with inscription (circa 1st century BC), which sold for $94,500, more than six times the upper estimate, from the Weprin sale in New York in 2022, as well as an elegant Roman gold-band glass mosaic bottle (early 1st century BC), which sold in London the same year for £81,900, against a £15,000-£25,000 estimate.

London-based antiquities dealer Rupert Wace notes that there are collectors, too, of fragments of the extremely rare cameo-etched glass vessels, in which two layers of glass are blown together and then carved by specialist gem and glass engravers. The British Museum's *Portland Vase*, dated 5–25 AD, is the most famous surviving example. Wace, who has available a cameo glass fragment of a satyr from the early 20th-century Giorgio Sangiorgi collection, adds: 'Prices for the most exceptional pieces have certainly risen and combined with rarity, skill of manufacture and a famous old collection history, then these pieces are in strong demand.'



Roman blue cameo glass fragment, c. 1st century AD, Rome, opaque white on cobalt blue glass, 7.8cm. Rupert Wace (price on application)

Photo: Richard Valencia

Deborah Kay Butterfield
(b. 1949)

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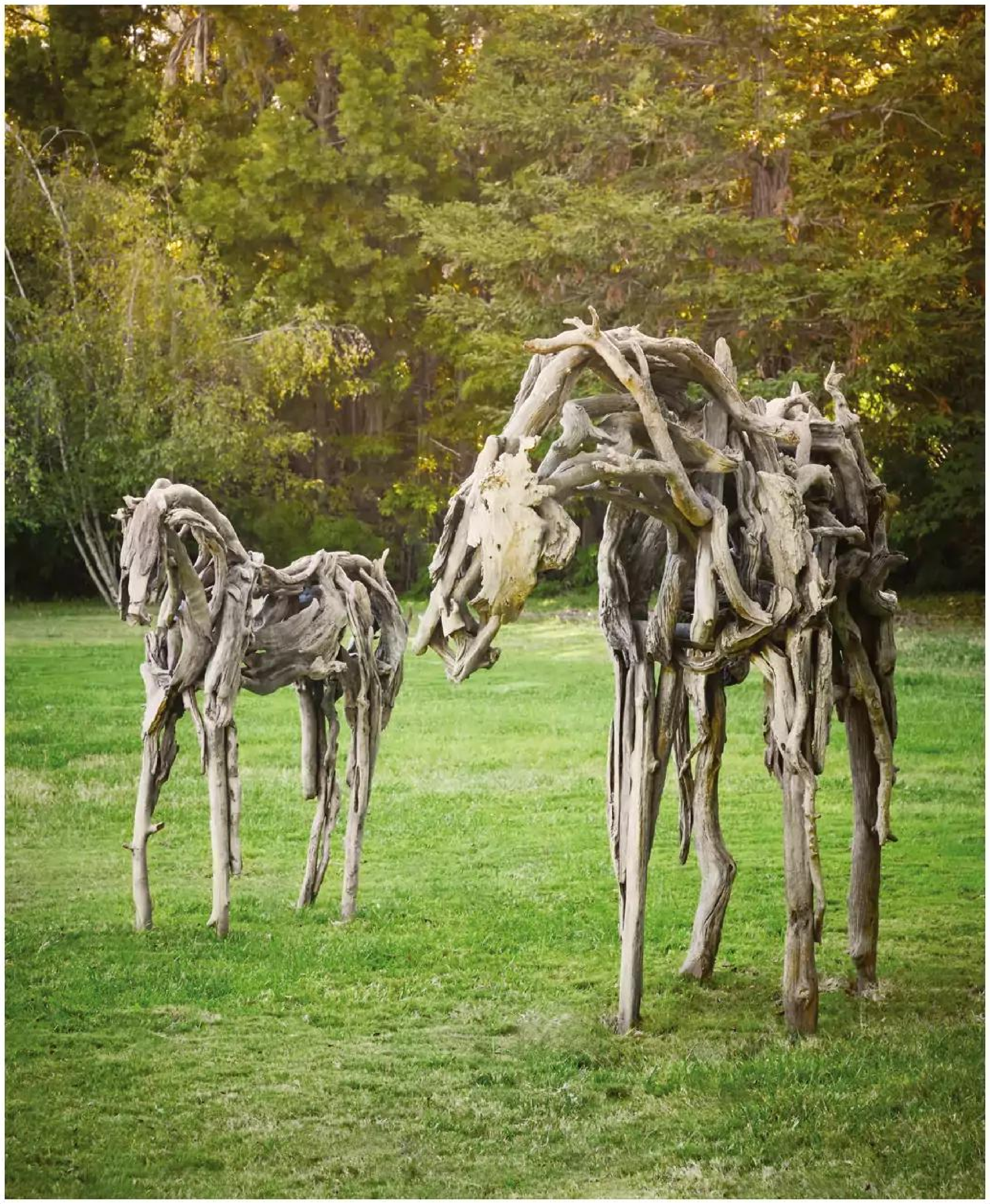

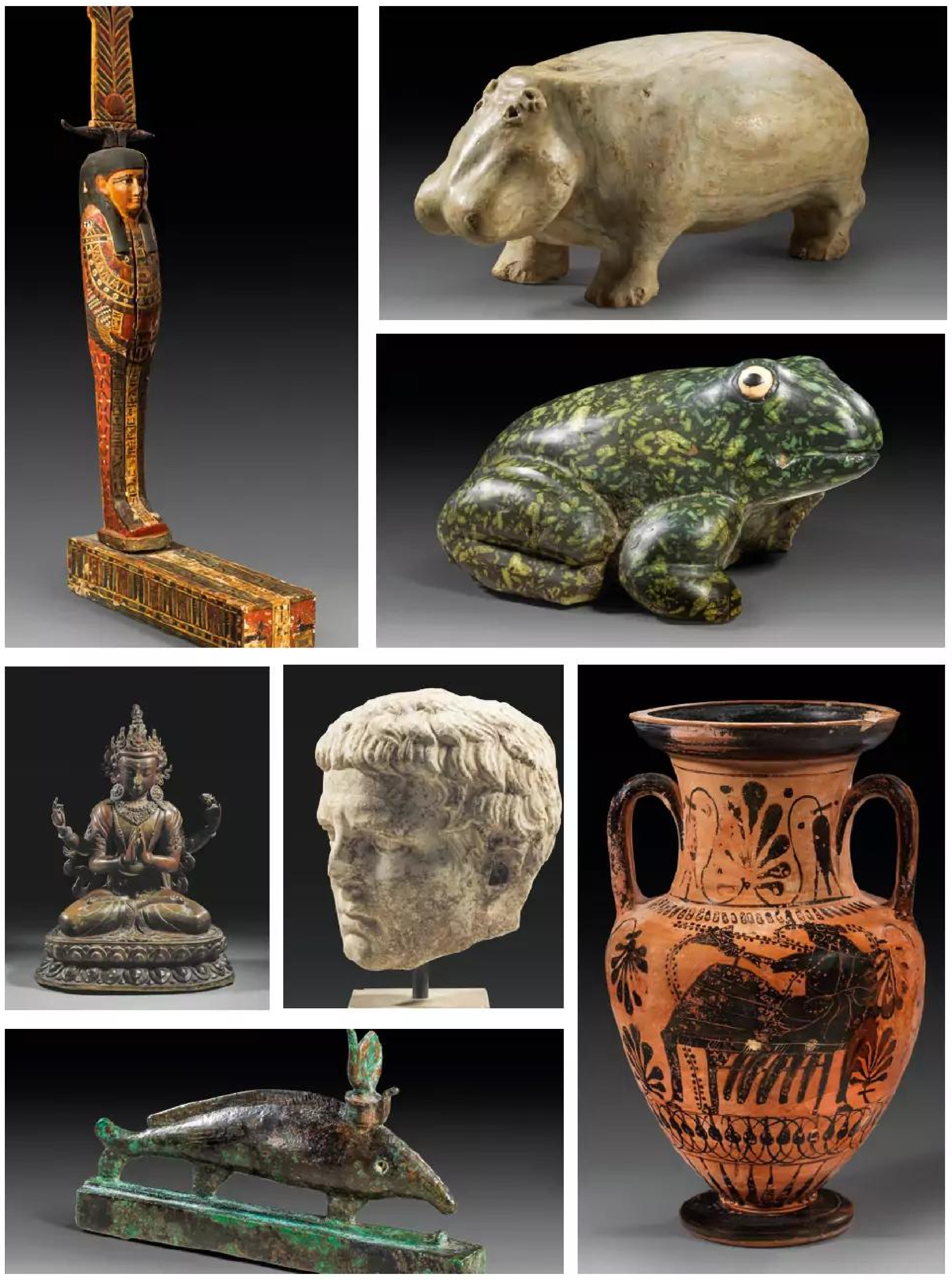

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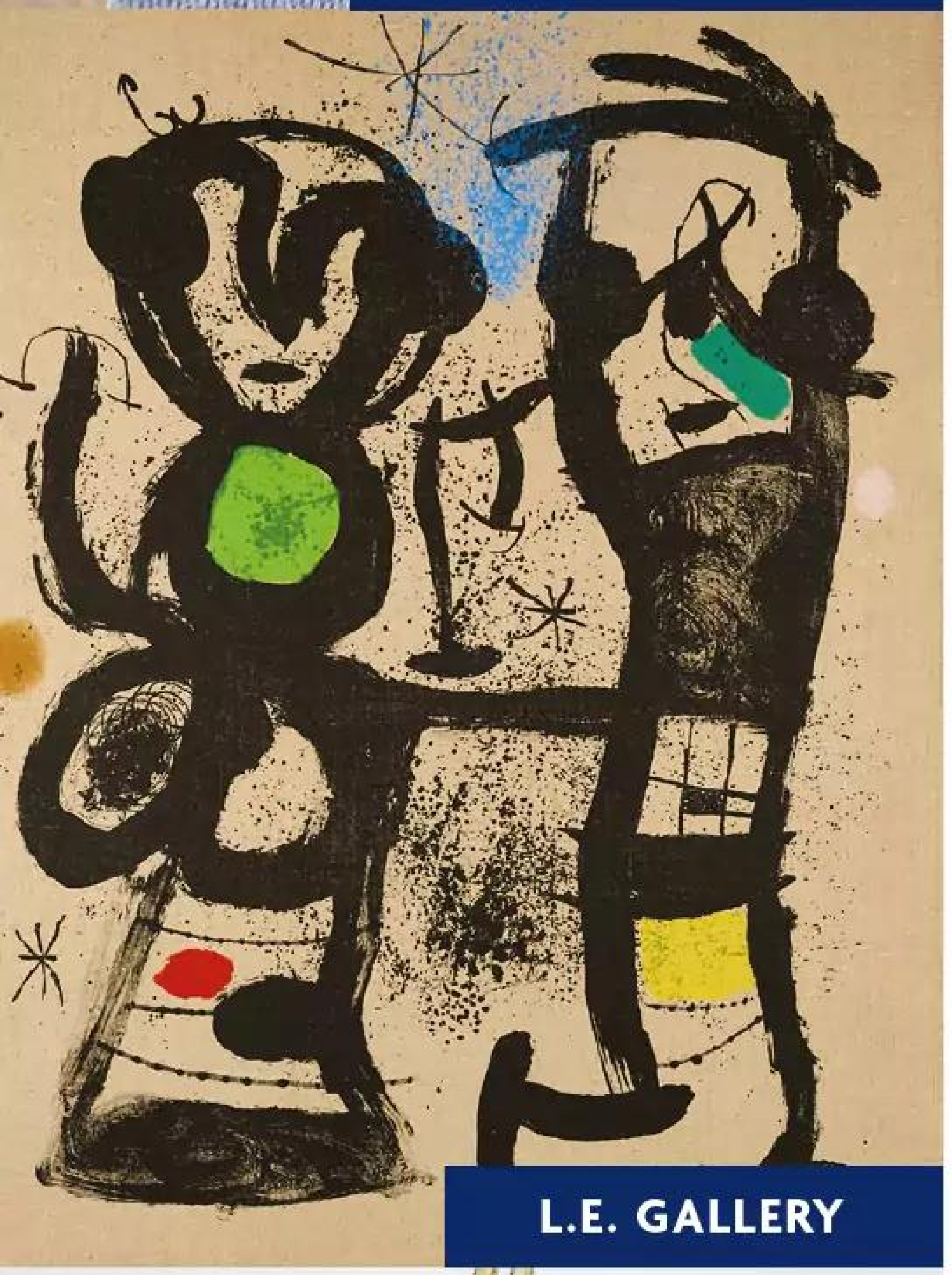
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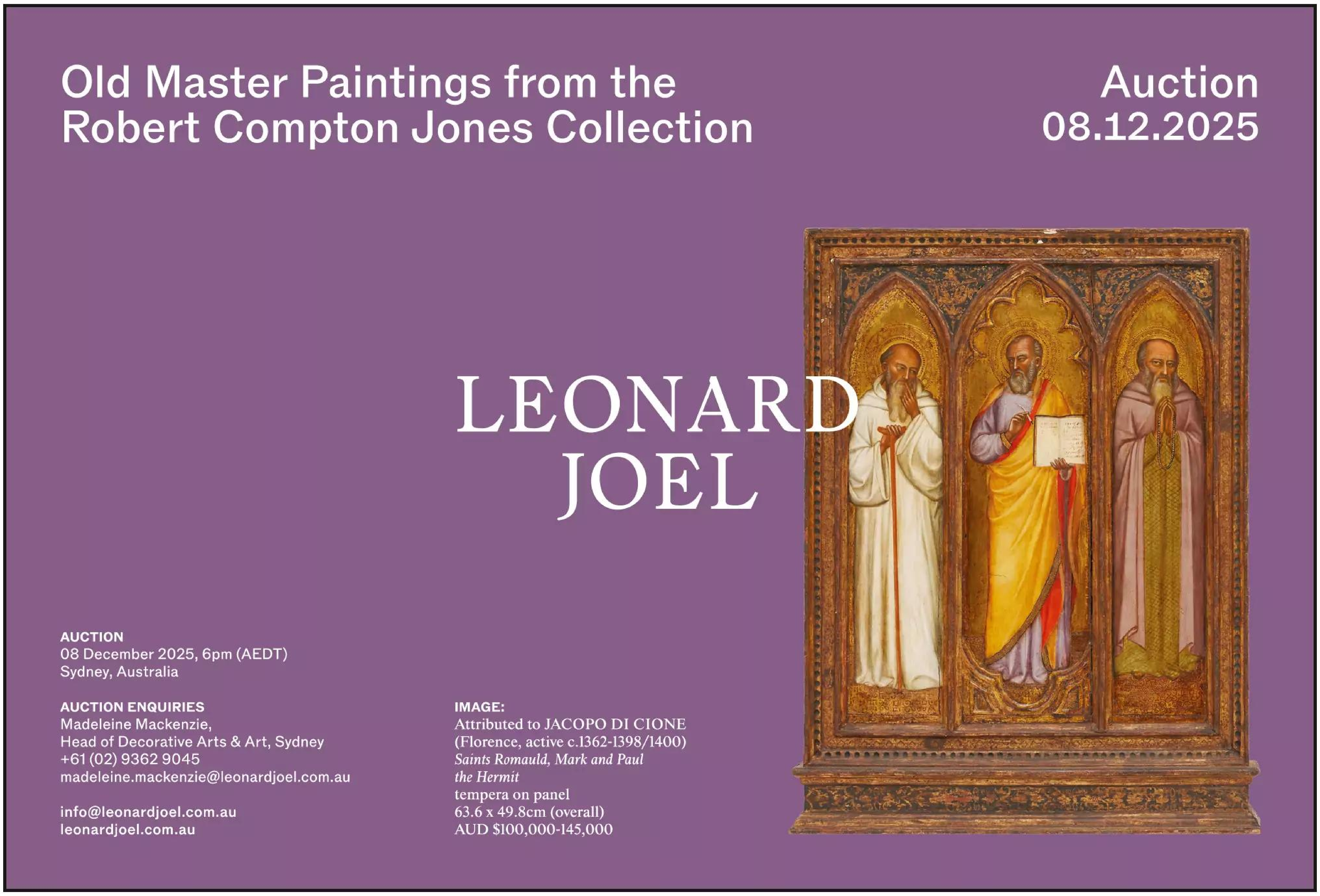

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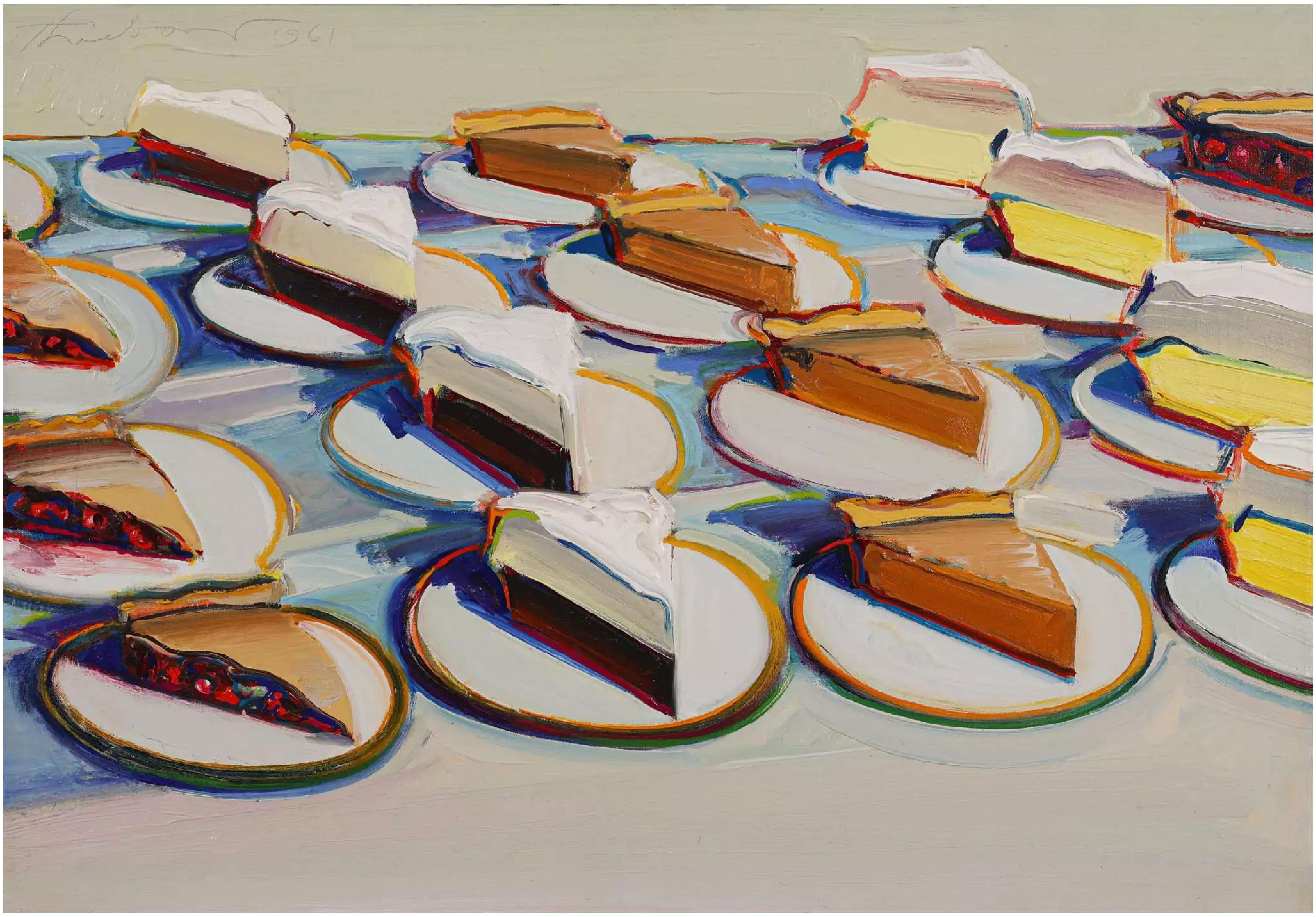

Pie Rows, 1961, Wayne Thiebaud (1920–2021), oil on canvas, 46 × 66cm. Wayne Thiebaud Foundation

Photo: Wayne Thiebaud Foundation; © Wayne Thiebaud/VAGA at ARS, NY and DACS, London 2025

REVIEW

Sentimental education

Jean-Baptiste Greuze: Childhood Illuminated
16 September–25 January 2026
Petit Palais, Paris

This tour of Greuze's 18th-century morality tales reveals the ideas that shaped the age, writes **MICHAEL PRODGER**

Just how far Jean-Baptiste Greuze has fallen from the height of his fame in the second half of the 18th century was made clear by Anita Brookner in her pioneering 1972 biography of the artist. 'His paintings, with certain exceptions, appear to us tawdry, if not obscene,' she declared. 'Clearly he appealed to a vein of feeling that has now become extinct.' Tawdry because his doe-eyed children and moral scenes of family life appear now to be designed simply to stir cheap emotion; obscene because he used uncomfortably young girls as models for his homilies on lost innocence – for which, read virginity.

To view him as his peers did, when for three decades from 1755 he was the darling of French art, requires mental effort because Brookner's 'vein of feeling' was both short lived and psychologically distant. Greuze (1725–1805) painted for the age of *sensibilité*, that curious historical moment sandwiched between the *ésprit* and sometimes libidinousness of the rococo and the muscular, public morality of neoclassicism. It ran parallel to the Age of Reason and sought to replace God-given determinism with a moral code founded on sensation. The result was a conflation of the softer emotions – love, friendship, kinship, kindness, sympathy – with virtue itself.

Among the writers who promulgated this feeling were the Abbé Prévost, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Denis Diderot and Samuel Richardson, while in painting the ground was laid by Watteau and Chardin. Greuze's art therefore emerged into a receptive environment. Some 100 of his paintings, drawings and engravings are now on display in 'Jean-Baptiste Greuze: Childhood Illuminated' at the Petit Palais in Paris, a major exhibition that both marks the 300th anniversary of his birth and also seeks to reestablish Greuze's tumbled reputation by showing that beneath the syrup was seriousness.

Greuze studied at the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture where his prickly self-esteem won him few friends. 'He might have had supporters had he been wise enough to recognise them as his superiors,' as his niece Madame de Valory put it in her 1813 account of his life. Nevertheless, he submitted five works to the Salon of 1755 and was admitted to the Académie.

He met with instant success: one of those pictures was *La Lecture de la Bible* (1755), which encapsulates the reasons for his renown. An interior scene, full of detail, it shows a poor but respectable family gathered to listen to the father read a spiritual text. Seven children, from toddler to teen, attend in various attitudes – the youngest is more interested in playing with a dog, others are caught up in the words and imbibing the lesson. It is a painting to reassure Greuze's bourgeois audience that they need not concern themselves with the ordering of the classes because spiritual, if not material wealth could be found by the humblest in society.

The reception of the painting encouraged Greuze to produce a series of these family admonitions over the next 20 years. In *La Dame de Charité* (*c.* 1775) a young mother encourages her hesitant daughter to give a bedridden former soldier a gift of alms; in *La Piété filiale* (1763) he showed the fruits of beneficent paternity with a father on his deathbed surrounded by his caring family; while a pair of paintings, *Le Malédiction paternelle: Le Fils ingrat* (1777) and its pendant *Le Fils puni* (1778), demonstrates what happens in a disordered household when an ungrateful son is cursed by his father and returns years later to find his father's body still warm on his deathbed.

The one major setback in Greuze's career came when he projected this theme of fathers and sons on to Roman history. *Septimius Severus Reproaching his Son Caracalla for Having Tried to Assassinate Him* (1767–69) was both Greuze's much-delayed submission piece to the Académie and also his attempt to establish himself as a history painter. Based on Poussin's *Death of Germanicus* it was a resounding failure: even Diderot, the painter's friend, thought it contained 'no magic... no harmony... everything is dull, hard and dry'. The Académie confirmed his acceptance, but only as a genre painter; his Roman work was deemed 'unworthy'. A furious and humiliated Greuze refused to have anything more to do with the Académie until 1804. Nevertheless, the painting was to prove hugely influential on Jacques-Louis David's neoclassicism of the 1780s.

Children were always a large part of Greuze's staffage, hence the exhibition title, and there is little between his portraits of children (his own among them), his *têtes d'expression*, and the children that populate his genre scenes. Indeed, although there is a cluster of fine portraits in the exhibition, including one of his wife Anne-Gabrielle Babuty that could almost be mistaken for a Nattier (though not one of the Dauphine, a commission he refused saying he was not in the habit of painting 'plastered faces'), his children are largely generic – all soft-eyes, rosebud mouths, silky hair.

'Childhood has ways of seeing, thinking, feeling that are unique to it; nothing is less sensible than to want to substitute our own,' wrote Rousseau – and this is what Greuze showed. Indeed, the exhibition devotes a room to his paintings of innocence menaced: a series of young girls, each mourning the death of her pet bird, another with a basket of broken eggs and an expression that makes it clear she is troubled by more than the loss of a few sous, and *La Cruche cassée* (1771–72), a pre-teen girl by a fountain with a broken pitcher that signifies her as a sexual victim – a message reinforced by an errant nipple poking through her blouse.

As this admirable exhibition shows, the artist's career was laced with irony. This advocate of the family had mixed fortunes with his own: he sent his children off to wet nurses although he deplored the practice; he fought with his wife – Greuze was like Mr Punch dodging his spouse's blows, according to a witness – and they divorced in 1793. *La Femme en colère* of *c.* 1785 is his pictorial comment on married life. What's more, as in his own *La Pieté filiale*, Greuze died in poverty (his wife having embezzled much of his money), but with two of his daughters at his bedside – a *tableau mourant* that he himself could have painted.

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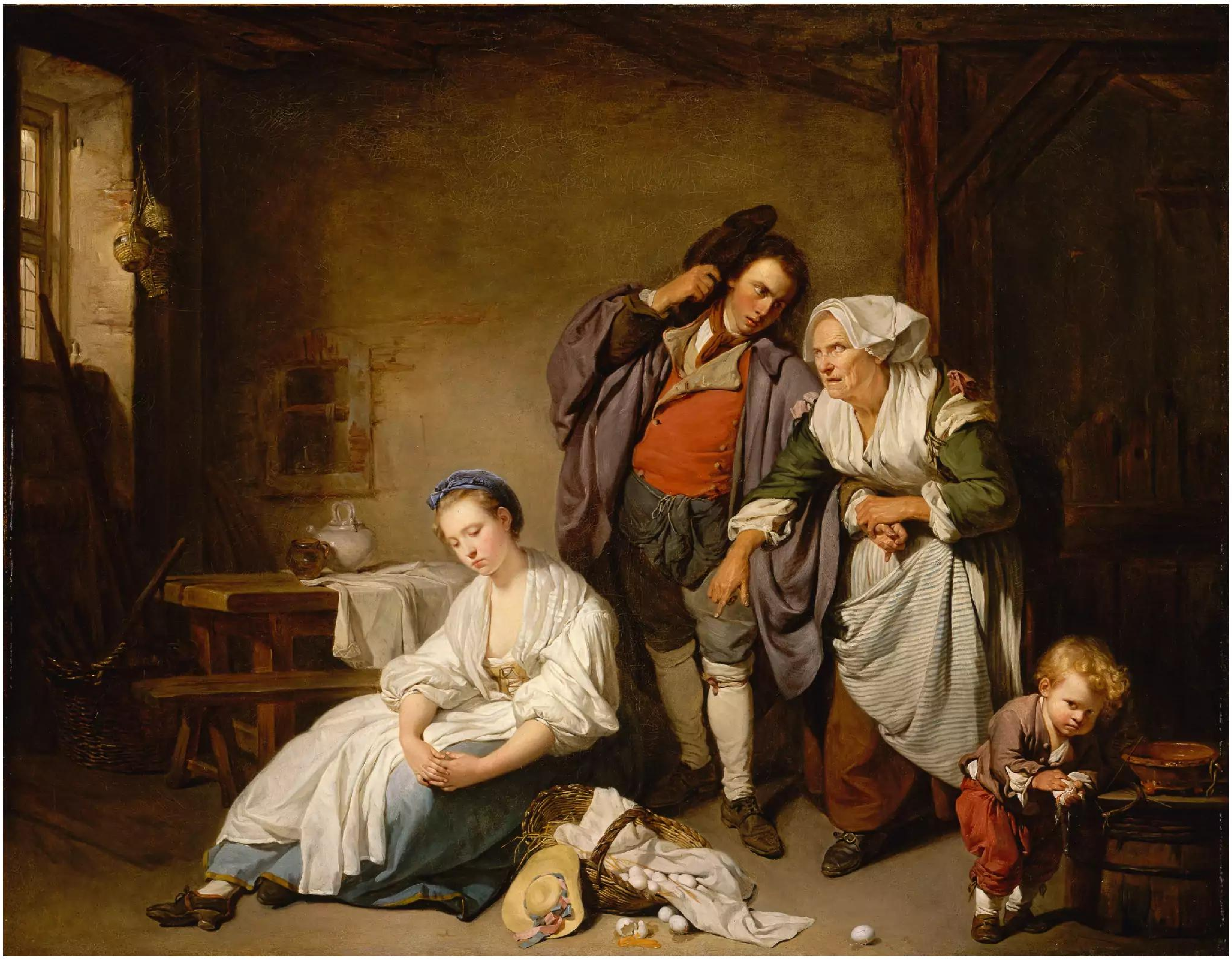
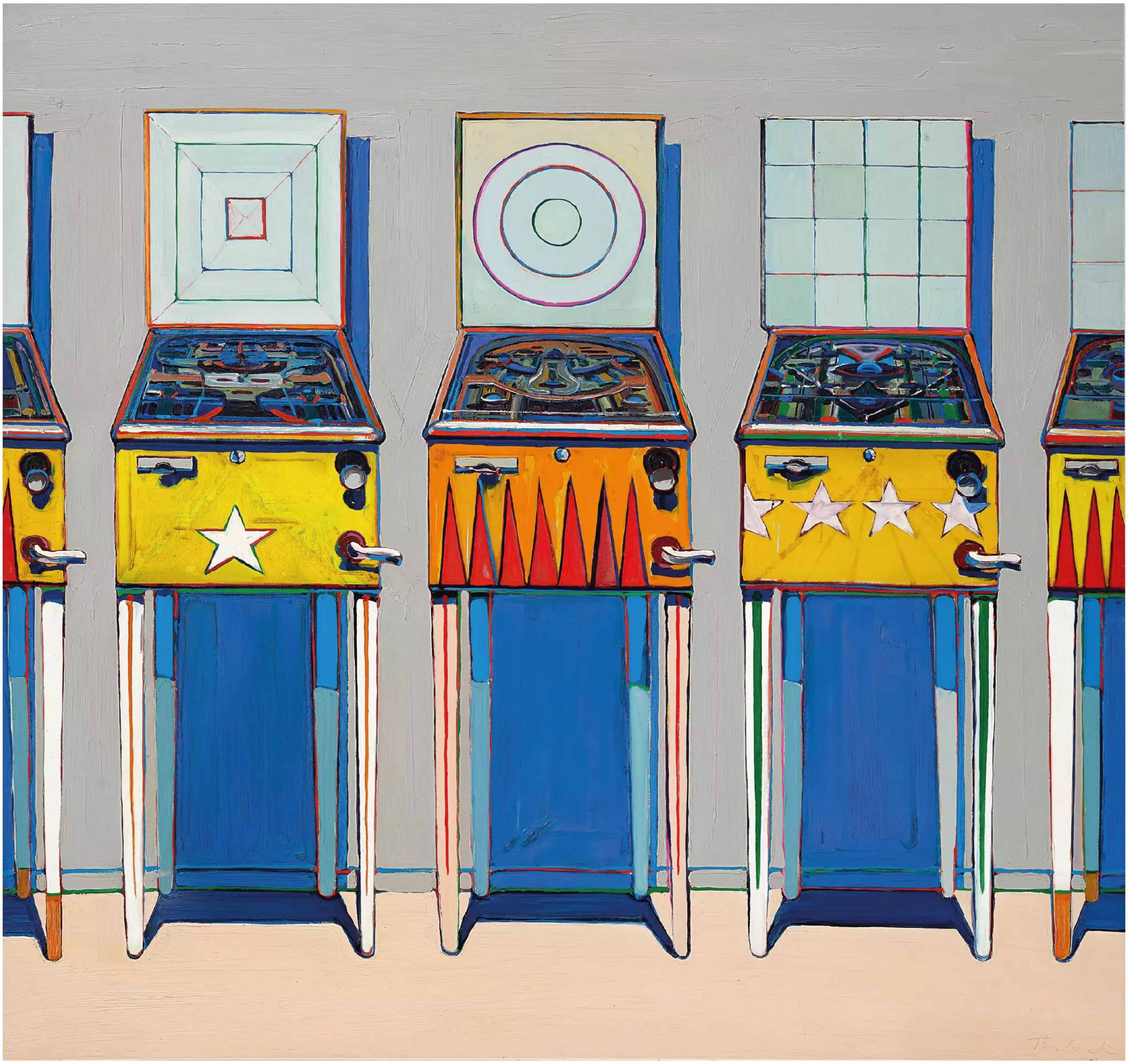
Michael Prodger is a senior research fellow at the University of Buckingham.



Les œufs cassés, 1756, Jean-Baptiste Greuze (1725–1805), oil on canvas, 73 × 94cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York



Four Pinball Machines, 1962, Wayne Thiebaud (1920–2021), oil on canvas, 172.7 × 182.8cm. Private collection

Courtesy Acquavella Galleries; © Wayne Thiebaud/VAGA at ARS, NY and DACS, London 2025

REVIEW

Eye candy

Wayne Thiebaud: American Still Life
10 October–18 January 2026
Courtauld Gallery, London

Whether emblematic of American dream or nightmare, Thiebaud's confections are moreish, writes

CHARLES DARWENT

In 1961, out of the blue, Wayne Thiebaud developed a sweet tooth. Two years earlier, he had finished a canvas called *Meat Counter* (1956–59), the second painting in this show of his work at the Courtauld. Its subject was much as its title suggests – four rolled joints of what is perhaps beef on top of a vitrine holding cuts of a smaller size. In 1962, Thiebaud made what may be seen as a pendant to this work – a larger painting, roughly twice the size of the first, called *Candy Counter*. The die was cast.

Much remained the same. Counters, whether in butchers or sweet shops, are about display, and display is about consumption. In the case of these two pictures, that consumption has a double meaning.

As with a growing number of American artists in the early 1960s, Thiebaud's fascination was with what the social critic Vance Packard had recently popularised (or unpopularised) as *consumerism*. Where Pop artists would tend to focus on consumer durables, though – Chevrolets, white goods, and so on – Thiebaud's fascination was with things that would be literally consumed. Above all, his eye was caught by cakes.

You can see why these might have appealed. Both *Meat Counter* and *Candy Counter* were underpinned by an interest in synaesthesia; that is to say, with producing a visual image that would evoke other senses as well. The palette and brushwork of *Meat Counter* are meaty, carnal. You can imagine Francis Bacon looking at the painting and sniffing. But in *Candy Counter*, the loop is closed. Thiebaud's brushwork becomes that of a confectioner, so that the picture both represents confectionery and is itself a confection.

This tendency reached its apogee in works such as *Cakes* (1963), on loan from the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. Here, Thiebaud's paint is laid on the canvas like icing. Were you to lick it, you imagine, it would taste of the thing it depicts. If that seems an easy enough trick, though, *Cakes* and its coevals are more complex than they seem.

Between *Meat Counter* and *Candy Counter*, there was a change of gender. Butchery, in 1961, was men's work, just as red meat was men's food. Cakes were baked by women and, proverbially at least, eaten by them, being made of sugar and spice and all things nice. The fictional baker Betty Crocker – created for advertising purposes in 1921, the year after Thiebaud's birth – was familiar to a whole generation.

A decade before John Berger, the painter of *Cakes* had changed his gaze from a male to a female one. He was not just taking as his subject objects thought of as womanly, but producing them in a womanly way. This lent works such as *Display Cakes* (1963) a curious unease. For all its vitreous perfection, there is something uncanny about these patisserie paintings. There is also more going on in them intellectually than their sugared surfaces suggest.

Let me digress. To celebrate the publication of my biography of Josef Albers in 2018, a friend made me a tray of Albers cupcakes. Her intention was playful. What could be less suited to icing than the soft-hard-edged remorselessness of Albers's celebrated series *Homage to the Square*?

Unexpectedly, the joke backfired. The *Homages* worked rather well in sugar: the cupcakes not only tasted nice, they looked nice, too. The assumption that geometry and lusciousness were antithetical to each other was wrong. Albers himself had known this. '[My paints] come out of the tube and I smear them on like butter on my pumpernickel,' he said. As with butter, so with icing. Bound up in the idea of baking as women's work was an assumption of its triviality.

It may be useful to approach Thiebaud via Albers rather than, say, Andy Warhol.

Catalogue by Barnaby Wright
and Karen Serres
ISBN 9781913645892, £30
(Paul Holberton Publishing)

One of the non-edible subjects in the show is *Four Pinball Machines* (1962). The screens of these are a painterly in-joke: one shows the modernist grid, another a Jasper Johns target – the first of these had appeared in 1955 – and a third what looks very like an Albers *Homage*. It is clear, too, that Thiebaud's post-1961 sweet tooth also had geometric underpinnings. If Albers had laid claim to the square, works such as *Pie Rows* (1961) and *Boston Cremes* (1962) are studies in triangles and parallelograms, *Cakes* and *Display Cakes* in circles.

There are other Albers parallels, too. Thiebaud had turned his back on meat as a subject in part because he found it insufficiently processed. 'I paint those foods that have mostly undergone some kind of change or metamorphosis,' he said. His paintings of cakes took the process of process a step further, from butter and sugar to iced sponge, from iced sponge to paint.

Bound up in all this was an idea of the American Dream, built on mass production, a faith in standardisation – that any car that rolled off an assembly line would be identical to the cars before and after it, and that this likeness was desirable. Albers' *Homages*, too, seemed to roll out of the painter's Connecticut basement. Nearly 3,000 of them survive, each based on one of four templates. And yet these paintings are Romantic rather than classical, being at heart concerned with the impossibility of sameness. The apparently hard edges of Albers' squares are soft as butter, hand-drawn rather than ruled. So, too, with the triangles of Thiebaud's *Pies*.

The drive of 20th-century American painting, as of American manufacturing, had been towards working in series, yet Thiebaud's triangular slices of cake and pie, like Albers' squared pumpernickel, showed that standardisation was a dream; also, perhaps, a nightmare. The work in the Courtauld is above all a celebration of the imprecise hand over the immaculate eye.

Charles Darwent's latest book,
Monsieur Ozenfant's Academy,
is published by Art Publishing, Inc.

REVIEW

Yesterday's men

Monuments
23 October–3 May 2026
The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA and The Brick, Los Angeles

Confederate monuments get a makeover from contemporary artists, writes **LYRA KILSTON**

A curious new feature has emerged in the public spaces of some American cities over the past decade: the empty plinth. In New Orleans, a barren white column rises more than 18 metres high; in Baltimore, a block of granite sits mutely, ringed by trees. Both are missing the large statues of Confederate army leaders that stood upon them for nearly a century.

Hundreds of monuments to the Confederate cause – the slavery-preserving side in the 19th-century Civil War – were erected throughout the American South in the early 20th century. A transatlantic offshoot of Europe's nationalist 'monumentomania', the public display of such markers was framed as memorialisation and the preservation of heritage, but functioned as a quiet campaign of terror in the deeply segregated region. Since 2015, as part of the nation's overdue racial reckonings, many of these statues have been vandalised and more than 200 (of nearly 700) have been removed – either by protestors, or by city decree in secret night operations.

Where should these statues go? What can they communicate, ousted from their context and places of honour? These difficult questions of historiography reverberate through the powerful and disturbingly timely exhibition 'Monuments', in which 11 decommissioned statues – transformed, defaced or in pristine condition – are shown alongside contemporary works and new commissions by 19 artists. (Such questions are also dangerous and capable of inciting violence, prompting additional security measures at the exhibition's two venues.)

One answer is found in Kara Walker's treatment of a statue of Confederate martyr Stonewall Jackson. The bronze statue previously stood outside the county courthouse in Charlottesville, Virginia, and when calls for its removal were approved by the city council in 2017, it became the focal point of a notorious and deadly white supremacist rally. After its removal, Hamza Walker, director of The Brick, arranged to give it to Kara Walker as the most loaded and historically charged of raw artistic materials. She sliced apart and reconstructed the general and his horse, creating a monstrous cubist tower of dismembered arms, hooves, armour and haunches, with Jackson's faceless head hanging from the horse's neck. Details like the prominent veins on the horse's leg and deep creases in Jackson's boot are rendered uncanny in their jarring positions, while the title, *Unmanned Drone* (2023), asserts that such statues are weapons, sent into public spaces to intimidate and oppress.

Even in the context of an art exhibition thousands of kilometres from where they last stood, these 'weapons' still hold a disturbing power. They are deeply profane, like something you aren't supposed to see, evoking a feeling akin to hearing a racial slur. When the monuments are juxtaposed with contemporary artworks, new interpretations of the vast and lingering legacy of America's shameful past emerge. For example, in one gallery, Jon Henry's photographic series *Stranger Fruit* (2014–21) depicts Black mothers solemnly holding their limp sons in the Pietá pose – referring to the murders of unarmed Black men. These haunting images face a large Confederate statue of a nurse cradling a wounded soldier, erected in Baltimore in 1917 and sponsored by the Daughters of the Confederacy, a group responsible for the majority of Confederate monuments and still active today. Placed between them, cleverly, is *Descendant* (2025) by Karon Davis, a life-sized plaster-cast statue of her son, a young Black man standing confidently on a plinth and dangling a tiny replica of a Confederate equestrian statue from his hand, by the tail.

History can be ossified into permanent forms, but it is always subject to revision, alteration and disarmament. Nona Faustine's arresting photographic series, *White Shoe*, depicts the artist posing at New York City sites related to slavery. In *They Tagged the Land With Trophies and Institutions from Their Rapes and Conquests, Tweed Courthouse, NYC* (2013), she is shown nude, pushing against a massive stone pillar, starkly invoking the power dynamics still at play in our public spaces. In Bethany Collins's *Love is Dangerous* (2024–25), the artist carved speckled pink marble from the base of a decommissioned Confederate statue into delicate rose petals, an elegant reference to the contested origins of the Memorial Day holiday recognising fallen veterans.

Catalogue by Hannah Burstein,
Hamza Walker (eds.)
ISBN 9781636810997, $75
(DelMonico Books)

A commission by operatic singer Davóne Tines and film-maker Julie Dash, *HOMEGOING* (2025) was filmed in Charleston's historic Mother Emanuel AME (African Methodist Episcopal) Church, where nine church members were murdered in a 2015 hate crime, and at the Angel Tree, a massive, 500-year-old oak tree in South Carolina. The video is projected across a long wall in a darkened room filled with Tines's resounding gospel song. The camera pans slowly between the serenity of the church, Tines singing, and the tree's sinuous branches – forming a deeply moving spiritual tribute to the victims.

The fact that this exhibition is in the liberal bastion of California – where the recent removal of Confederate symbols sparked little to no controversy – raises the question of how it would be received elsewhere. Perhaps these ejected monuments would be more incendiary, or more invisible. But two artworks underscore how Los Angeles, or specifically Hollywood, was later complicit in sustaining Confederate myths. Stan Douglas's video installation reimagines scenes from D.W. Griffith's notorious film *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), a love letter to the Ku Klux Klan shot around Los Angeles. In another room, a towering equestrian Confederate statue faces a neon orange car, flipped 90 degrees with the hood crashed into the ground, emblazoned with the Confederate flag: Hank Willis Thomas's *A Suspension of Hostilities* (2019) replicates the race car featured in the TV comedy *The Dukes of Hazzard*, which normalised 'good ol' boy' Southern allegiance to the Confederacy as recently as the 1980s.

At the time of writing, a Confederate statue that had been removed in Washington, D.C. in 2020 was reinstalled following Trump's recent executive order to 'restore truth and sanity to American history'. The Civil War ended 159 years ago. Or perhaps it didn't.

Lyra Kilston is a writer based in Los Angeles.

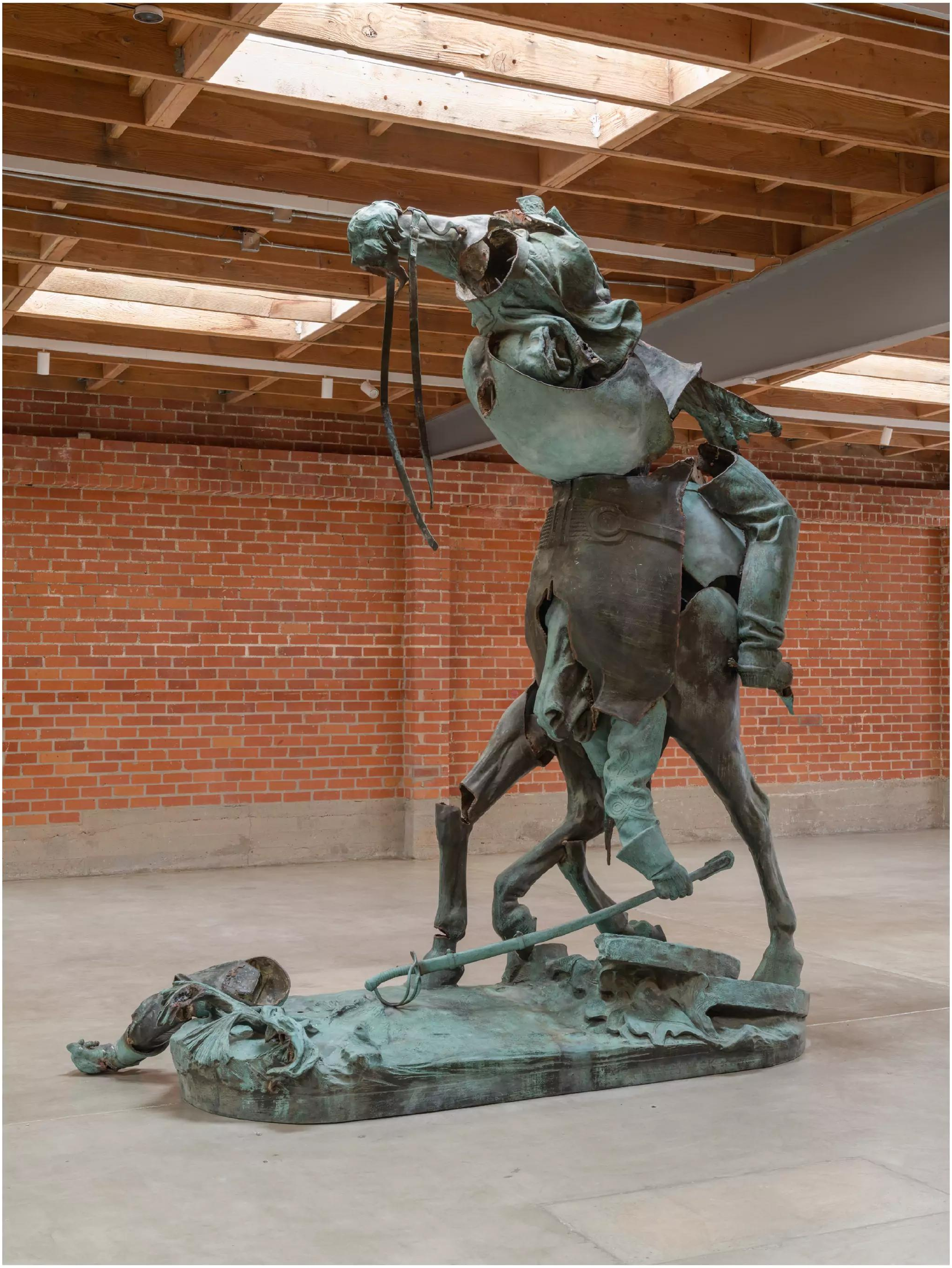


Photo: Fredrik Nilsen; courtesy the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA)/The Brick; © Kara Walker

Unmanned Drone (2023) by Kara Walker (b. 1969) as seen at The Brick, Los Angeles in 2025

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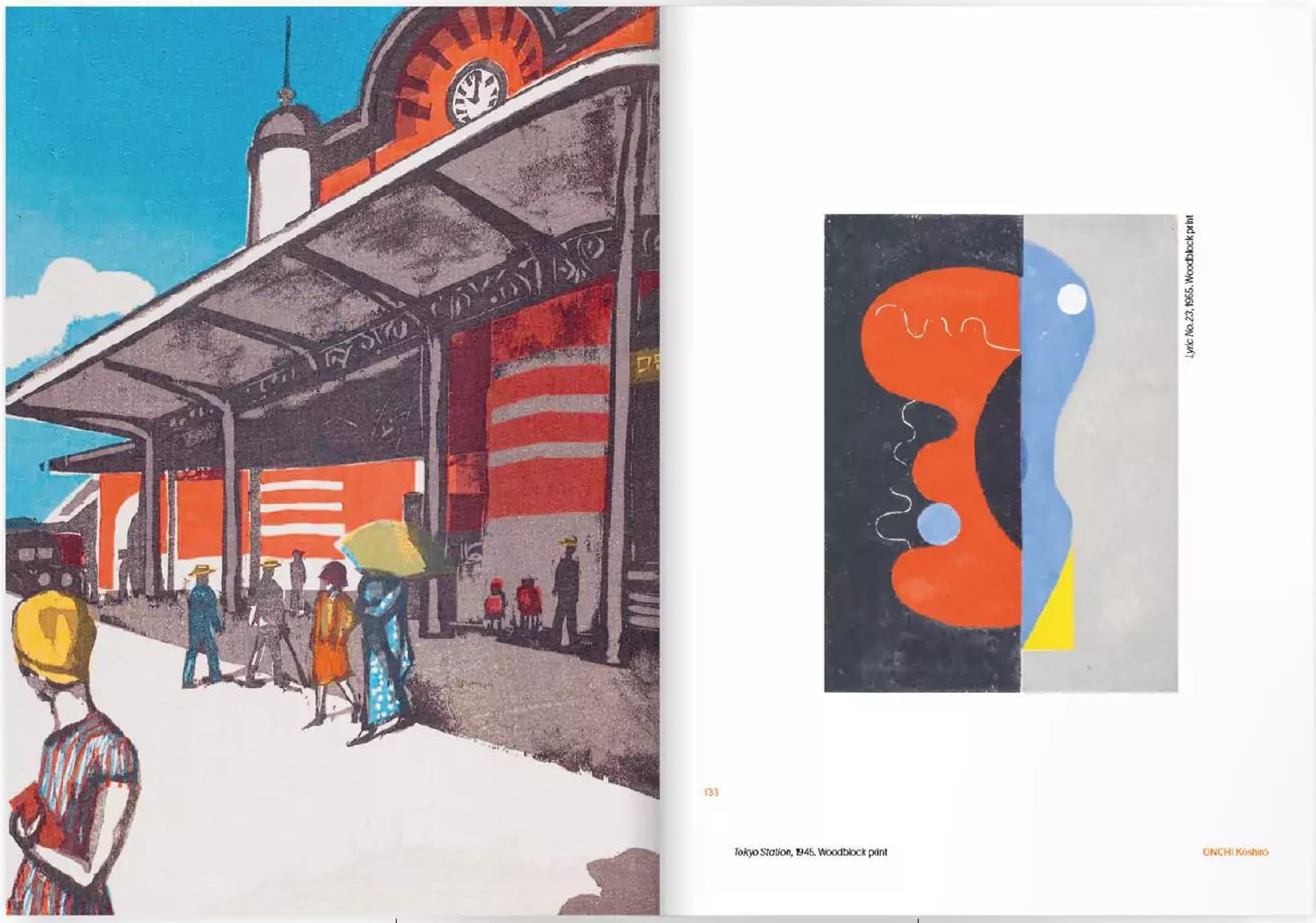
OFF THE SHELF

Apollo's selection of new books on art,
architecture and the history of collecting

Modern Japanese Printmakers: New Waves and Eruptions
Malene Wagner
Prestel, £35
ISBN 9783791377841

The production of handmade prints may have declined after the heyday of *ukiyo-e* as a result of the invention of mechanical processes, but artists have kept turning to the medium to achieve effects that can only be made more artisanally. This book presents prints by 43 artists working in a wide variety of styles, along with short profiles of makers.


Lyric No.23, 1955. Woodblock print
133
Tokyo Station, 1945. Woodblock print
ONCHI Koshiro

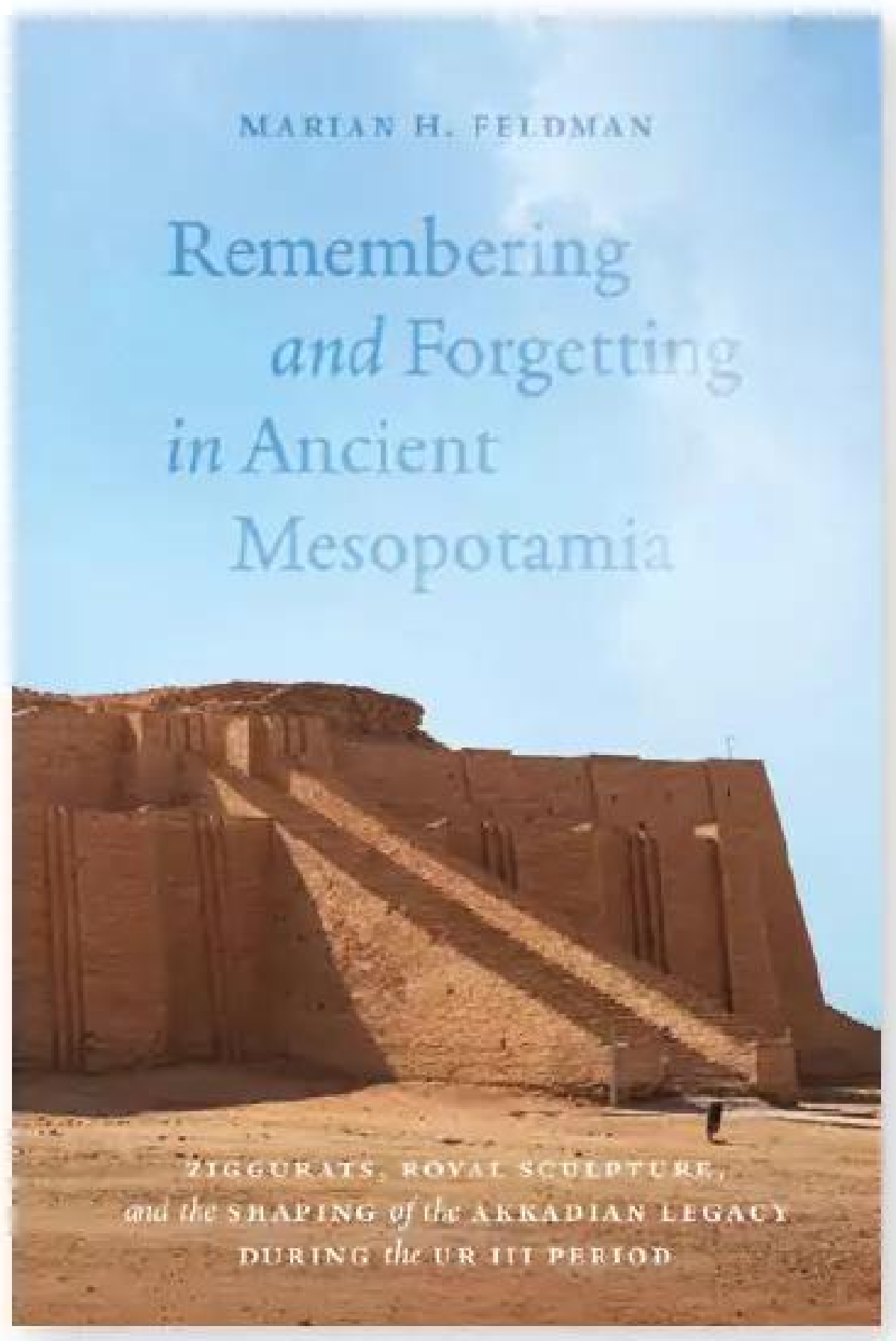
FACING DECAY
Beauty, Aging, and Cosmetics in Early Modern Europe
ERIN GRIFFEY

Facing Decay: Beauty, Aging, and Cosmetics in Early Modern Europe
Erin Griffey
Penn State University Press, $99.99
ISBN 9780271100227

Early modern women were just as in thrall to the beauty industry as we are today – but they made more of their potions at home, as the cosmetic recipes in this book attest. There was no shortage of beauty advice as well, from allegorical paintings to high-flown treatises.

Remembering and Forgetting in Ancient Mesopotamia
Marian H. Feldman
University of Chicago Press, $55
ISBN 9780226842851

At the end of the third millennium BC, the rulers of Ur took a highly selective approach to the built legacy of their Akkadian predecessors' dynasty, preserving certain ziggurats, statues and steles while systematically destroying others, as this book explores.


MARIAN H. FELDMAN
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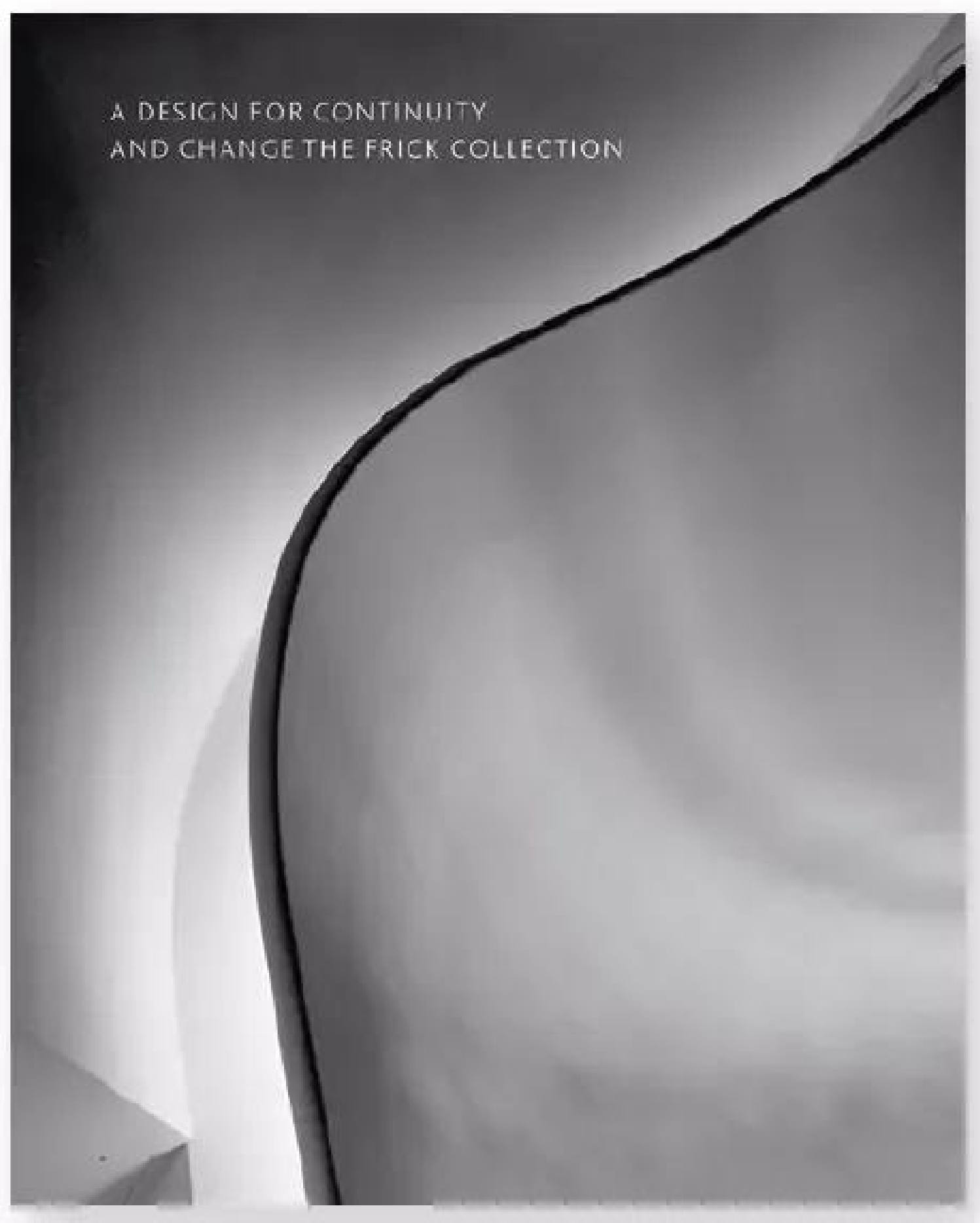
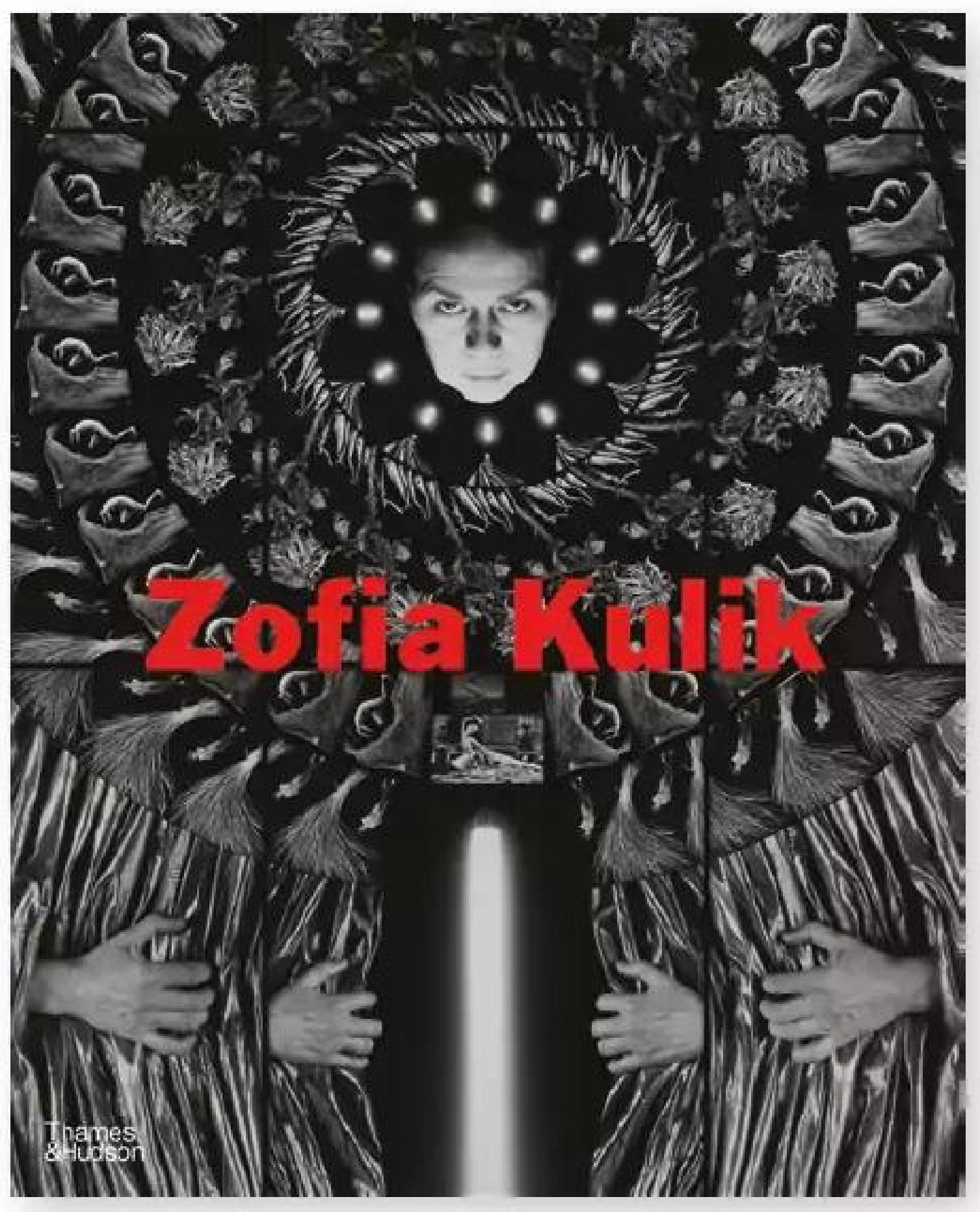

A DESIGN FOR CONTINUITY AND CHANGE THE FRICK COLLECTION

A Design for Continuity and Change: The Frick Collection
Ian Wardropper,
Annabelle Selldorf et al.
Paul Holberton Publishing, £45
ISBN 9781913645786

This celebration of the reopening of the Frick Collection and Annabelle Selldorf's thoughtful interventions in the Beaux-Arts mansion is accompanied by Hélène Binet's atmospheric photographs of the museum back in its rightful home.

Zofia Kulik: Works
Asia Zak Persons (ed.)
Thames & Hudson, £55
ISBN 9780500030301

In black-and-white photographic collages that can contain tens, even hundreds of exposed negatives, the Polish conceptual artist has created a body of work that amounts to a series of surreal self-portraits, an oblique history of post-war Poland and a running commentary on feminism and the avant-garde.


Zofia Kulik
Thames & Hudson

REVIEW

Mass culture

The Deformation: Attention and Discernment in Catholic Reformation Art and Architecture
Susanna Berger

WILLIAM ASLET discovers what drove the taste for distorted shapes in Catholic Europe

In Paolo Sorrentino's *The Great Beauty* (2013), the film's protagonists go on a night-time journey through Rome's most famous attractions, among them the colonnade at the Palazzo Spada popularly known as the 'Prospettiva Borromini'. Sorrentino's camera follows as one of the characters, Ramona (played by Sabrina Ferilli), enters and walks along what appears to be a regular colonnade of evenly spaced paired Doric columns. The further Ramona moves into the colonnade, however, the smaller the columns get and the closer they stand together. As she goes from being dwarfed by the colonnade to almost outgrowing it, we realise that the colonnade and its apparent depth was nothing but an ingenious illusion.

Artifice and illusion are among the themes of Sorrentino's film. As Susanna Berger charts in *The Deformation*, they also fascinated the creators of the false colonnade – Borromini, the Augustinian monk Giovanni Maria da Bitonto and their patron Cardinal Bernardino Spada. Indeed, as Berger shows, it was central to their world view. Spada's illusionistic colonnade was built into the heart of his palazzo in central Rome and was the centrepiece of any visit to the house – the will of his brother records that certain doors were left open to create ideal views. If this seems strange to a modern mind, Berger shows that in Counter-Reformation Rome strangeness was a quality that was cultivated by artists, architects and thinkers to make deep points about the world around them.

There is of course a sense in which this kind of spectacle was designed simply to impress. It is no coincidence that, as Berger shows, the perspective effects used to create the colonnade originated in the world of Renaissance and baroque set design. But for Spada and for his visitors, this was no mere parlour game. As the Cardinal himself put it in an epigram written to James Alban Gibbes, a Scottish poet and physician based in Rome, the perspective colonnade was 'the image of a deceptive world'. By revealing that which appears grand actually to be small, Spada wrote, it showed that 'grand things under the heavens remain nothing except spectres'. Far from simply amusing them, Spada's colonnade sought ultimately to prompt visitors to ask themselves how they stood in relation to God.

Berger's book explores the intellectual culture that produced Spada's colonnade. She argues that the cultural imagination of Counter-Reformation Rome was uniquely fascinated with the idea of 'deformations', images that, like the colonnade, deliberately subverted the viewer's preconceived notions of how a visual system worked to cause them to have a heightened experience of that system. In contrast to reformations, which she argues are attempts to return a system to a known ideal, deformations are deliberate attempts to move the system away from this ideal, while not necessarily challenging it. If this all sounds a little difficult to grasp, this is because the lack of clarity was in many ways the point. As Berger puts it, 'deformations are rhetorical in the sense they are persuasive, but they persuade via other means than strict clarity'. Deformations could serve different ends: to elicit feelings of pleasure on the part of their perceivers, to exhibit the wealth of the patron, or to display the enigmas of experience. At their most successful, deformations could establish philosophical or religious truths or even bring their perceivers to a more intense form of religious experience.

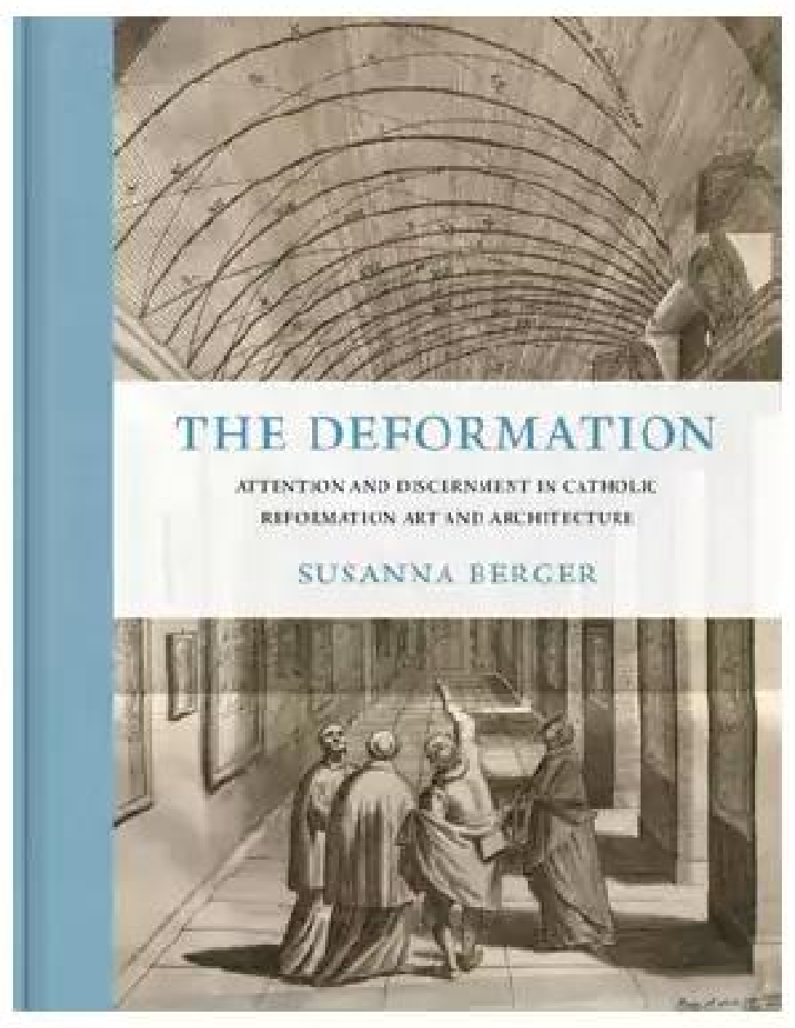
Berger does not therefore seek to give an overarching account of the 17th-century Catholic mind, but of a particular phenomenon in a particular context. The implications of her study, however, stand to provide new insights into the intentions behind many of the greatest buildings of the Roman baroque. Supplanting the characterisation of Heinrich Wölfflin of its architecture as formless, by instead using the term 'deformation' she explores its architects' interests in form and the manipulation of form.

In doing all this, she attempts to complicate histories of art made in the aftermath of the Council of Trent. These have generally emphasised the extent to which Counter-Reformation art prioritised rhetorical clarity and immediacy of comprehension over ambiguity. But, as Berger observes, deformations could be rhetorical and persuasive in a different sense. By bringing the viewer through a pre-planned series of mental contortions, those who conceived deformations could use them to create heightened emotional and even spiritual states in their viewers.

Berger's account is not just about the great buildings of the high baroque in Rome, however, but covers many other fascinating examples of deformations, some of which will be familiar to the reader, many others not. We encounter works of anamorphic art that, like the celebrated example of Holbein's *Ambassadors*, can be understood only when viewed from a particular angle; mathematical, perspectival and religious treatises; and works of art in overlooked media such as turned ivories. Indeed, Berger casts this latter form of miniature sculpture as critical to understanding the mentality that lay behind deformations. Made out of a series of deformations, these small ivory objects, she contends, were so intricate as to be incomprehensible, something that could bring viewers almost to a transcendental state.

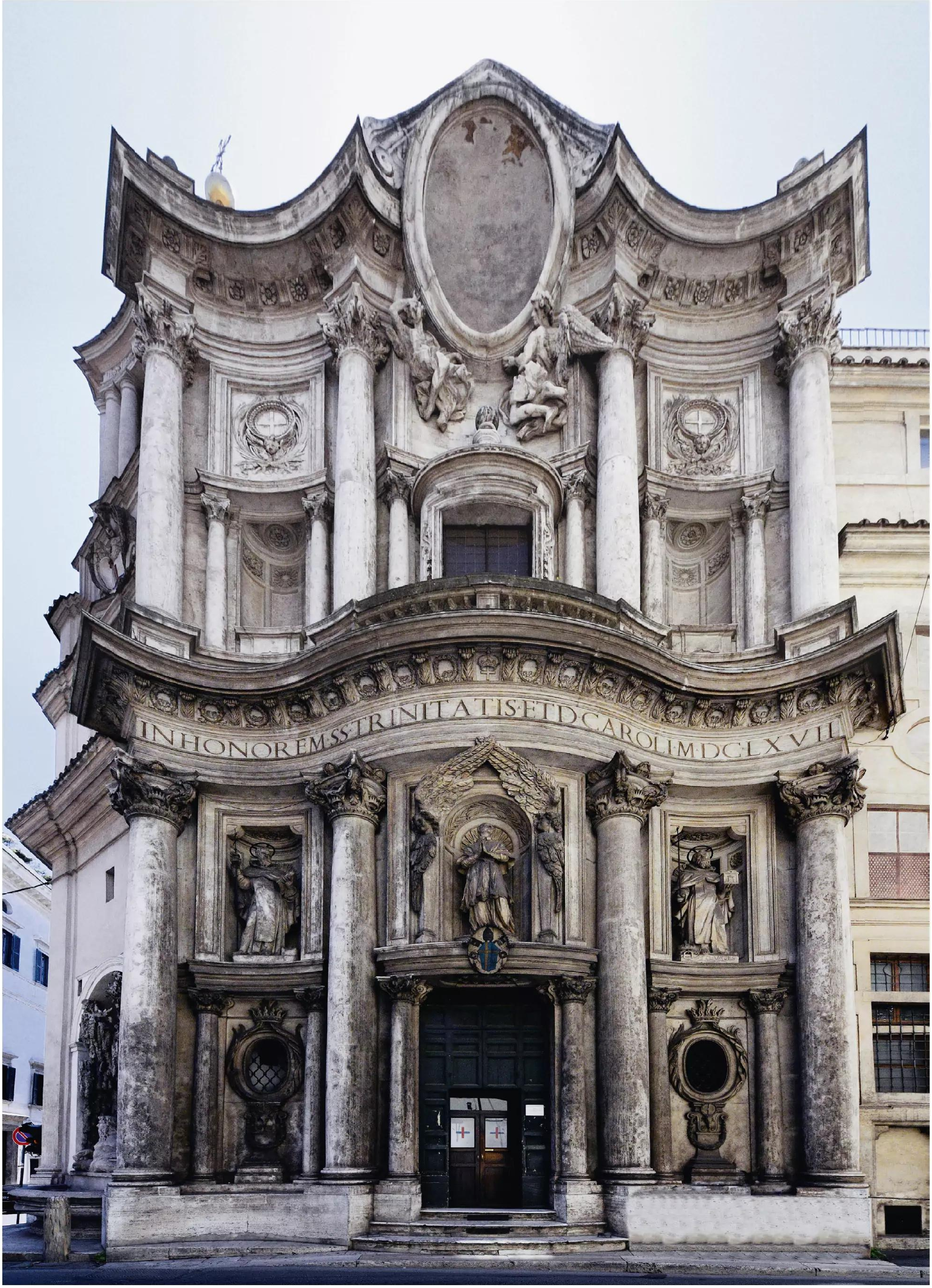
Deformations were far from being uncontroversial even in this period. Borromini's church of San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane appalled and beguiled critics in equal measure. But by recovering how the sensation of incomprehensibility could be a positive aesthetic experience, Berger helps us better understand what an architect like Borromini was trying to achieve. And in doing this she loses nothing of the sense of wonder that was so clearly delighted in by the artists and patrons she studies. Pull-out images abound in this book, and a mirrored sheet of paper is included at the back of the book that, when placed in a certain way, makes sense of an anamorphic image of Saint Francis.

Today, perhaps as much as in the 17th century, deformations still have the power to beguile.


THE DEFORMATION
ATTENTION AND DISCERNMENT IN CATHOLIC REFORMATION ART AND ARCHITECTURE
SUSANNA BERGER

Princeton University Press, £55
ISBN 9780691201016

William Aslet is a junior research fellow at Worcester College, Oxford.


IN HONOREM SS TRINITATIS ET D CAROLI M DC LXVII

The facade of the church of San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane in Rome, designed by Francesco Borromini (1599–1667)

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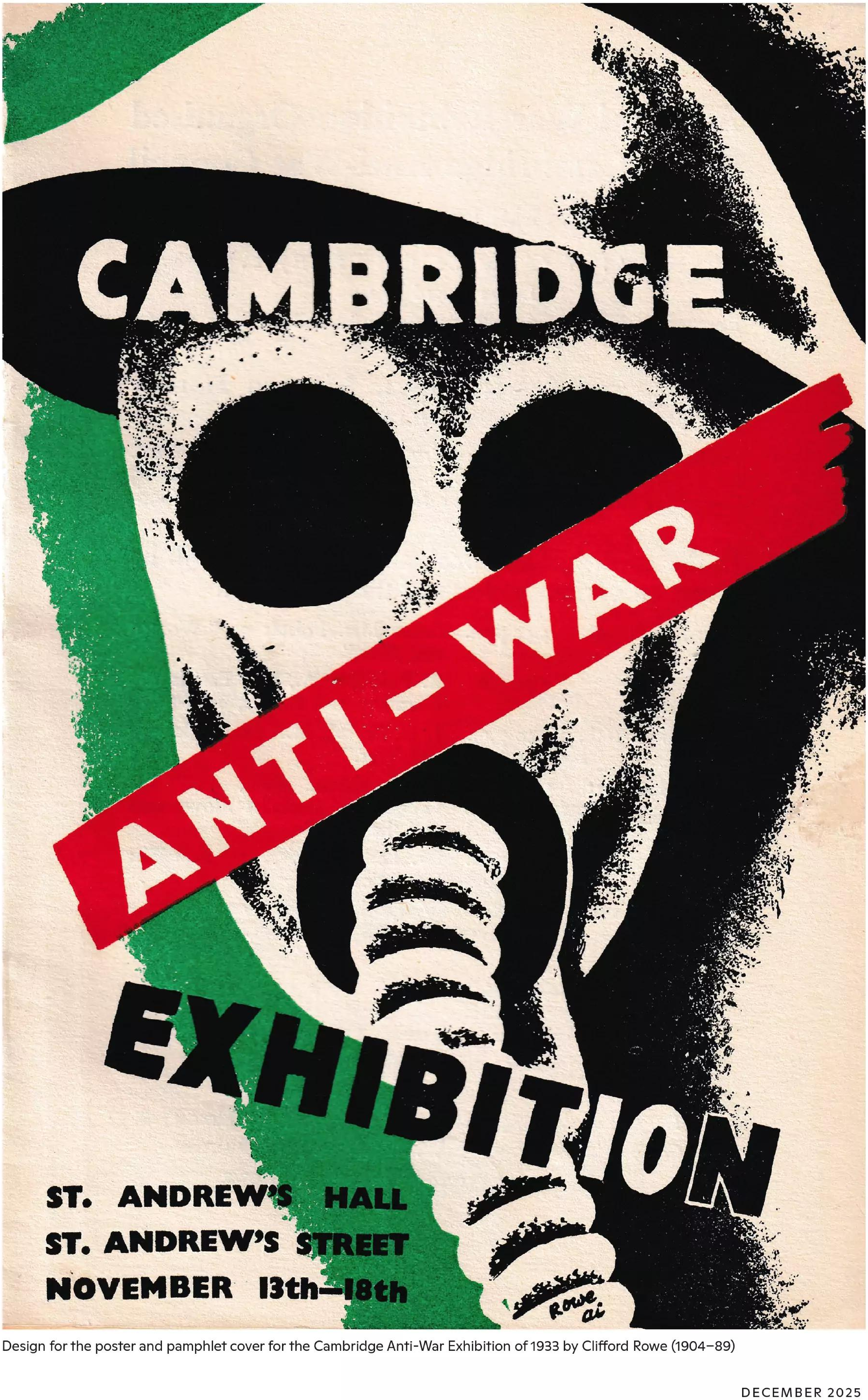
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Design for the poster and pamphlet cover for the Cambridge Anti-War Exhibition of 1933 by Clifford Rowe (1904–89)

© Anna Sandra Thornberry, daughter of Clifford Hooper Rowe

REVIEW

Draw the line

Comrades in Art:
Artists Against Fascism 1933–1943
Andy Friend

MATTHEW TAUNTON on a provocative account of the role of art in an age of tyranny

Amid the global rise of the far right, geopolitical instability and economic shocks, historians and journalists increasingly compare the present with the 1930s. That partisan decade can seem to us like a time when art for its own sake had to be set aside, as artists turned urgently to 'the flat ephemeral pamphlet and the boring meeting', as W.H. Auden wrote. Even before the decade ended, disillusionment had set in – and, during the Cold War, a host of repentant ex-Communists lined up to deliver the message that political commitment, especially 'Marxist dogma', leads inevitably to artistic failure.

However, Andy Friend's illuminating book *Comrades in Art* reveals a rich seam of committed art that dispels clichés about the Red Decade. It also reopens pressing discussions about the functions of art in a time of political crisis, to which Cold War pieties provided a neat but unsatisfactory conclusion.

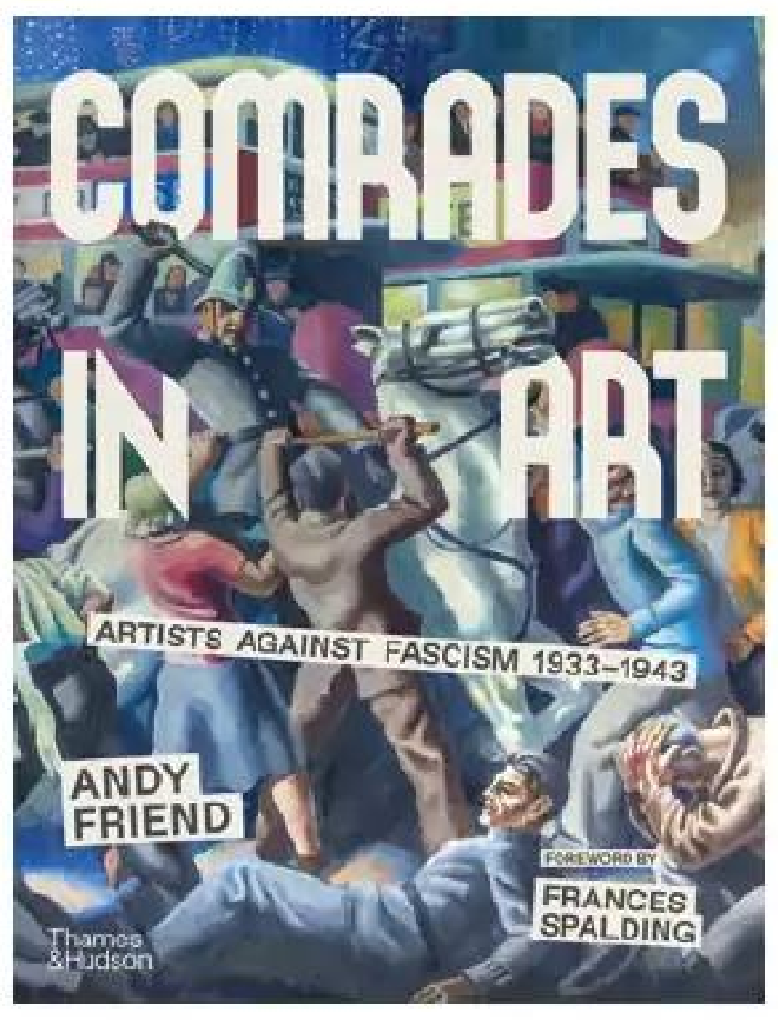
The Artists' International Association (AIA), founded in London in 1933, aimed to promote and coordinate artistic responses to the rise of fascism in Europe. At its core were a group of Communist artists and architects whose posthumous reputations have not flourished: Pearl Binder, Misha Black, Felicia Browne, Clifford Rowe and the 'three Jameses' (Fitton, Boswell and Holland), best known for their illustrations in *Left Review*.

But, as Friend shows, a 'clear majority of the country's leading artists' in this period were also involved directly or peripherally in the AIA, lending material support or taking part in its exhibitions. They included Vanessa Bell, Eric Gill, Duncan Grant, Barbara Hepworth, Paul Nash, Ben Nicholson and Henry Moore. The AIA brought non-aligned artists, social democrats and liberals together with Communists in the fight against fascism and, in that sense, it was an archetypal institution of the Popular Front period. While the group soldiered on until 1971, *Comrades in Art* follows its first decade of intense activity, ending in 1943 with a sense of dissipation as internationalist anti-fascism was increasingly drowned out by jingoism.

Friend assembles a striking visual archive to show that the AIA did not champion a single agreed aesthetic style. The Cold War ideology that aligned modernist abstraction with capitalism and socialist realism with communism was yet to harden. When the Nazis charged abstract artists and the curators who promoted them with 'cultural Bolshevism' and hounded them into exile, it seemed obvious that the primary task of any anti-fascist artistic organisation was to welcome these exiles. Many of them exhibited at the AIA's 1935 exhibition 'Artists Against Fascism and War'. Even more eclectic was 'Unity of Artists for Peace, Democracy and Cultural Development' at the Whitechapel Art Gallery in 1939, with sections devoted to abstract, figurative and Surrealist work.

At the same time, over the course of the 1930s, the Soviet Union – still a beacon of hope to many in the AIA – adopted an increasingly clear policy in favour of socialist realism, which also influenced the group. The 'AIA core' could be sceptical of avant-gardes – as when Percy Horton remarked, after the International Surrealist Exhibition in London in 1936, that 'it was damned cheek of André Breton and others to pose as Marxists'.

Surrealist art foregrounded suggestive and cryptic juxtapositions, but there was a significant impulse in the AIA to create visual works that delivered clear political messages. 'We were all artists by training and intention, graphic designers by occupation, illustrators and cartoonists by conviction,' remarked James Holland. Indeed, the group's graphic work is arguably the most arresting: AIA pamphlets were not as flat as those Auden imagined. *It's Up to Us* (1935), a *Left Review* special designed by James Fitton, gives the morbid absurdity of Dadaist montage a more direct political purpose. A skeleton in a suit holds a stethoscope to the bare chest of a living man, against a background of newsprint about the army's recruitment crisis. The satire is undeniably crude but, like many images in Friend's book, it was made for political communication rather than detached aesthetic appreciation.


COMRADES
IN ART
ARTISTS AGAINST FASCISM 1933–1943
ANDY FRIEND
FOREWORD BY FRANCES SPALDING
Thames & Hudson

Thames and Hudson, £40
ISBN 9780500027417

There were also large murals in a broadly socialist realist style, including Jack Hastings's *The Worker of the Future Clearing Away the Chaos of Capitalism* (1935) at the Marx Memorial Library in Clerkenwell, London. Hastings worked in fresco to produce a striking work, bold in its use of colour and reminiscent of the religious iconography associated with the medium. Friend finds it a 'somewhat lumpen homage to [Diego] Rivera' (with whom Hastings studied), but it is a remarkable piece; its amateurism cannot fully suppress the epic scale of its revolutionary ambition. Outsized figures of Marx, Engels and Lenin, joined by English radicals Robert Owen and William Morris, flank the idealised revolutionary worker of the future, who sweeps aside the rubble of the dying capitalist world.

Felicia Browne, who argued that the fine arts of painting and sculpture should be set aside at a time of acute crisis, downed tools when she left to fight in Spain. Yet before she was killed in 1936, she made outstanding sketches of Republican militia and supporters, not seemingly intended for publication or display. These are committed, partisan works, but they are not propaganda. Even when political crises threaten to reduce the visual arts to brute functionalism, they retain an intimate power as a means of reflecting on personal experience.

The left-wing art of the 1930s is often mischaracterised as being full of false certainties and dogmatic commitment. The picture Friend gives of the AIA is of a searching cultural movement, responding flexibly and creatively in real time to world events. *Comrades in Art* helps us to reimagine the politicisation of art that we associate with the decade – not as a cautionary tale, but as an unfinished project and a going concern.

Matthew Taunton is professor of modern literature at the University of East Anglia and author of Red Britain: The Russian Revolution in Mid-Century Culture *(Oxford University Press).*

REVIEW

To dye for

British Blonde:
Women, Desire and the Image in Post-War Britain
Lynda Nead

A fascinating study of the blonde in British culture impresses **PHILIPPA SNOW**

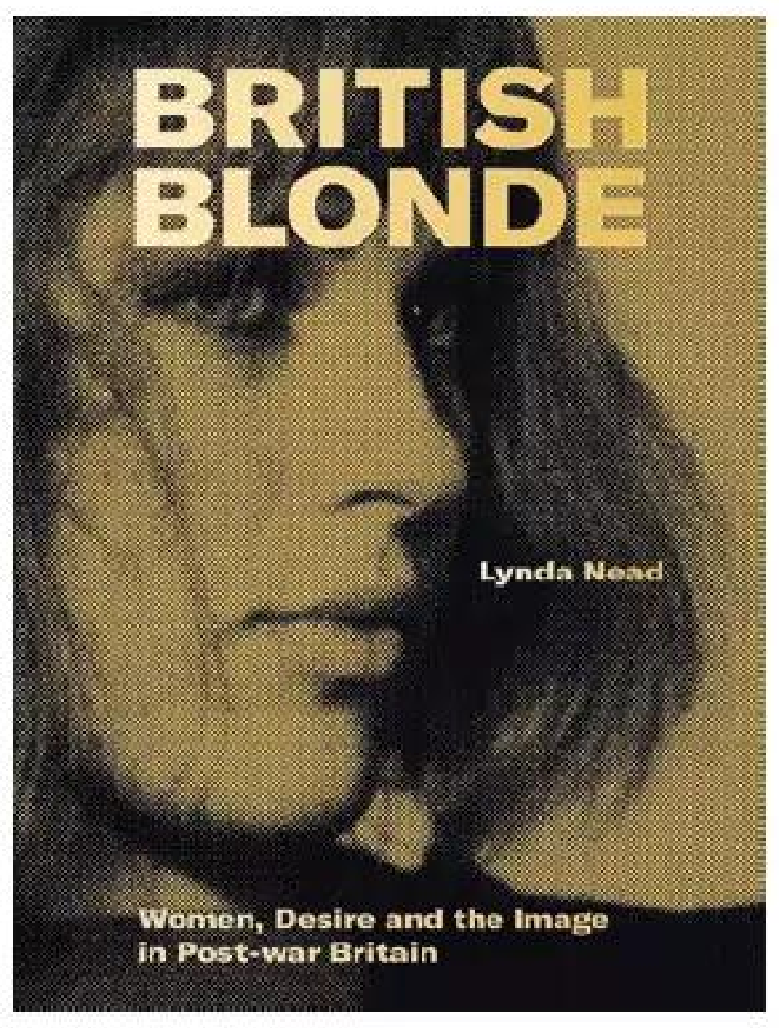
'I'm not bothered by the jokes about me being a dumb blonde,' the country singer Dolly Parton once said, 'because I know I'm not dumb. I also know I'm not blonde.' A proud phoney, she knew that her particular brand of blondeness – luminous and fried almost into oblivion – could only ever be achieved by artificial means, and that pretending otherwise would have been foolish. Her trademark hue became a gleefully trampy calling card and it conferred certain benefits: sexual admiration; fame; a useful underestimation of her talents on the part of Neanderthal misogynists, the better to surprise them with her musical genius. Didn't it follow that faking it was one of the things that made her smart in the first place?

Roughly two per cent of the world's population is naturally blonde; 61 per cent of women globally are said to dye their hair at least once a year, and since blonde is also the best-selling shade, it must follow that there are a dizzying number of ersatz blondes on the planet. Blondeness, perhaps more than any other hair colour, has a meaning, or rather a myriad of meanings – it is an easy visual shorthand for ditziness, seductiveness, whorishness, starriness, whiteness, bimbodom and, finally and most powerfully, all-American Hollywood glamour. Its contractions are in some way a reflection of the dichotomies inherent in womanhood itself, as least as it's perceived in the media and in culture. The blonde is at once luxe and cheap, alluring and sleazy, a foxlike manipulator and a dumb slut.

The academic and writer Lynda Nead's fascinating new book, *British Blonde: Women, Desire and the Image in Post-War Britain*, is a study of the journey of blondeness on our side of the Atlantic after the Second World War, focusing on four women in particular: the actress and sex-symbol Diana Dors, known as 'the British Marilyn'; Ruth Ellis, the last British woman to be hanged; the buxom *Carry On* comedienne Barbara Windsor; and the Pop artist and model Pauline Boty. The book begins with a text about Dors, who, as Nead demonstrates, exemplified the Hollywood dream mapped on to a fuliginous British reality. As a nickname, 'the British Marilyn' carried a sting in its tail, since it is no easier to imagine an actually British Marilyn Monroe than it is to imagine, say, a British Britney Spears. Already, Marilyn herself presented – like Parton – a proudly false image. She was a sexual phantom undoubtedly made in America, crafted with tools and with graft: bleach, a nose job, a chin implant, a canny and specific way of holding her face that helped transform Norma Jean into, as she put it, 'Her'.

This made Dors a simulacrum of a simulacrum, a mirage of a mirage. She was born Diana Fluck – a surname that skirted dangerously close to nominative determinism for a hot pin-up in training – in 1931, and was precocious enough that she began to bleach her hair at 12. In an essay written for school, she announced her intention to become a star and to live in Los Angeles in a house with a pool. She was to achieve this escape through aesthetic refinement, bettering herself by transforming her physical appearance into one that befitted the environment she dreamed of inhabiting. 'For a girl like me,' she told the *Daily Mirror* in 1956, at the height of her relatively brief fame as an actress, '[Hollywood] is the only place to live.' Blonde hair does not glow quite as radiantly under grey skies, after all, as it does in the Californian sun.

What does glow, in *British Blonde*, is Nead's prose, which in places is as white-hot as a platinum wig under a spotlight. Non-fiction writing that displays as much style as it does observational acuity is almost as rare as true blondeness and Nead is a natural. (I thrilled at her description of Ruth Ellis in the dock, in her 'eloquent' skirt suit with her hair freshly dyed, as being both 'the type of the age and its nemesis'.) Throughout the book, she presents blondeness as going hand in hand, for the women of the 1950s and '60s, with sexual, class and career aspiration.



Paul Mellon Centre, £30
ISBN 9781913107499

Monroe haunts all four studies like a ghost. Intermittently shimmering back into view – quite aside from her obvious status as a tonier prototype for Dors, she appears as a style inspiration for Ellis, who adopted a version of her cloud-like peroxide hairstyle in the hopes of transcending her working-class roots, and as a kind of transatlantic bimbo-in-arms for the bawdy, lovely Barbara Windsor, whom Nead presents circa *Carry On* as a sentient, inflated cartoon who is 'at once all body, and entirely uncorporeal'.

Perhaps most intriguing of all is the connection between Monroe and the artist Pauline Boty, who not only performed in costume as Marilyn while studying at the Wimbledon School of Art in the 1960s, but also used her as a painterly muse – most famously, for a work from 1963 whose title is a thesis in itself. In *The Only Blonde in the World*, Monroe seems to stride across the canvas just as she did across the global consciousness, with Boty recreating a press photograph from *Some Like It Hot* in feathery, spectral strokes. The real Monroe had died the previous year and yet, as Nead smartly demonstrates, echoes of her image – sometimes sleazy, sometimes gritty, sometimes presented as pastiche, but always indebted to the woman Norman Mailer once called 'more than the silver witch of us all' – could be found everywhere, even in working-class Britain, from the mid 1950s onwards.

Monroe remains the only blonde in the world, in a sense, being more or less unsurpassable in terms of her iconic status, and yet she has produced many descendants – golden heads gleaming in light and in darkness. Lest we forget, Nead reminds us near the end of the book: one of the nation's most famous blondes of the 1960s, just as touched by the aesthetic influence of Hollywood as many other British women, was the Moors murderer Myra Hindley. Her dead-eyed, platinum-haired mugshot feels chillingly like an accidental homage to Andy Warhol's *White Marilyn* (1962).

Philippa Snow is a critic and writer based in Norwich. Her most recent book, Trophy Lives: On the Celebrity as an Art Object, *is published by MACK Books.*

Barbara Windsor in a publicity still for *Crooks in Cloisters* (1964; dir. Jeremy Summers)

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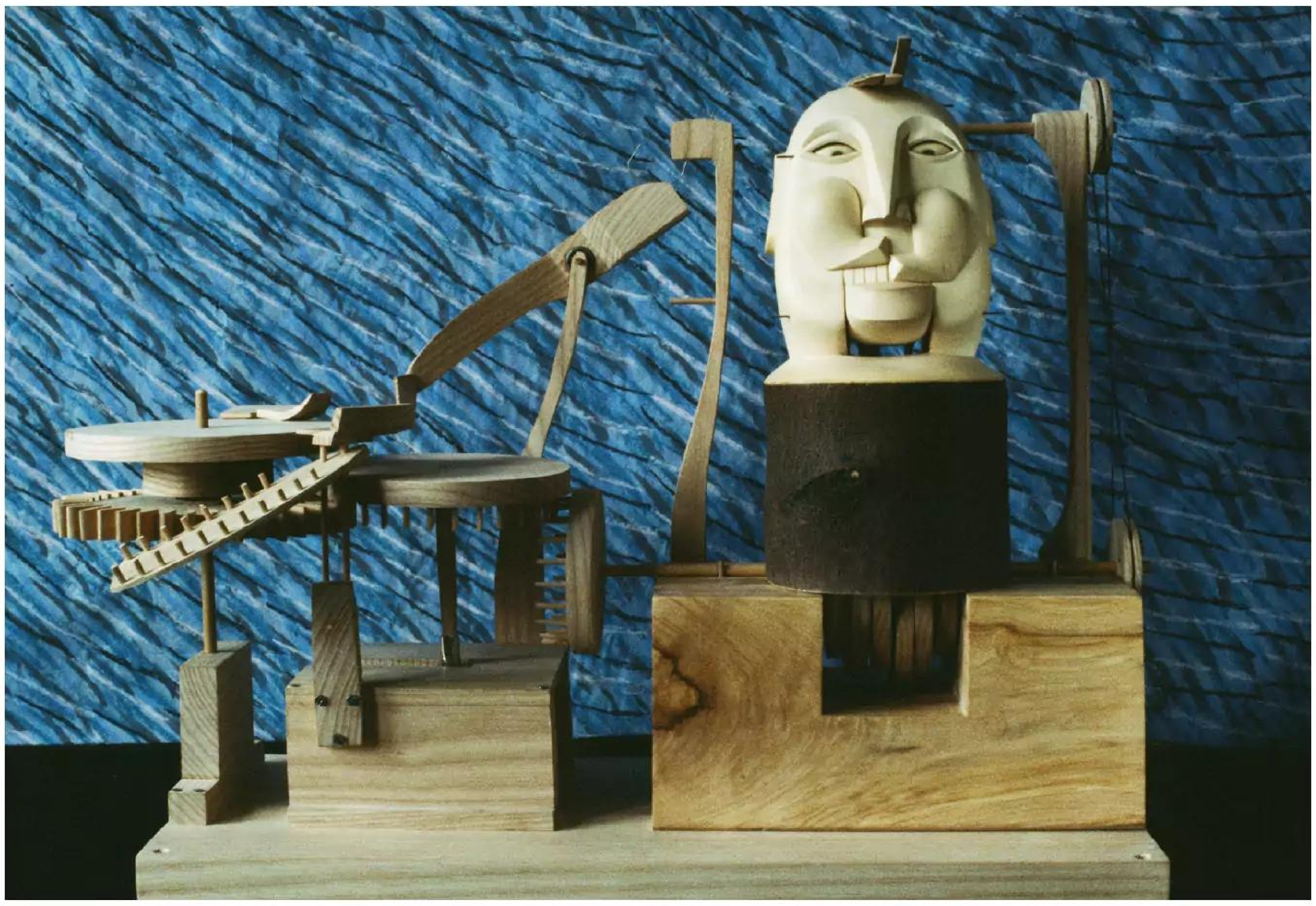
Czech your head

This Surrealist gem is testament to the twin forces that shaped an English city in the 20th century, writes **OWEN HATHERLEY**



Head with Cheeks and Hair (Collection Box), 1986, Jan Žalud (b. 1955), wood, perspex, AC motor, ht 35cm (approx). Southampton City Art Gallery

A short walk from where I grew up in Southampton, in the 1990s, there was a piece of graffiti in big capital letters along a red brick wall, by a main road. It read 'LONG LIVE DUBČEK'. It must have been painted 30 years earlier in 1968, when the leader of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia attempted a 'socialism with a human face', only to be overthrown by Soviet tanks. Thousands of refugees fled the country. Among them was the teenage Jan Žalud, who is responsible for *Head with Cheeks and Hair (Collection Box)*, an artwork from 1986 that is my favourite object in the city's municipal art gallery.

Southampton is one of those English places, like Luton, Leicester, Portsmouth or Plymouth, that are both extremely mundane and an ongoing experiment in multiculturalism and modernity. The two notable things to happen to my hometown in the 20th century – aside from its centre being flattened in one night in November 1940 – have been mass migration and municipal socialism. The latter was expressed through a progressive housing programme between the 1930s and the '80s and, more subtly, through the commissioning policies of its City Art Gallery, which since the interwar years has built an eccentric and rich collection of modern art.

Immigration is not a new phenomenon in Southampton – it has, like most ports, always been a city of migrants, whether Basque refugees from Franco's bombings in 1937 or the Jewish and Afro-Caribbean ancestors of 2000s UK garage star Craig David. But one of Southampton's particular distinctions is in how Central-Eastern European it is. Starting with the migration of displaced Poles in the 1940s, it has one of the largest Polish populations in the UK outside of London, with many Czechs, Slovaks, Hungarians, Lithuanians, Latvians, Romanians and Bulgarians alongside them.

Žalud didn't study art in his native Prague, but at a polytechnic in Sunderland. Yet his carved wood sculptures feel incredibly Czech, strongly of a piece with the great tradition of Surrealist animation in Czechoslovakia after the Second World War: think of the puppets of Jiří Trnka, or the satires in clay of Jan Švankmajer. Much of Žalud's sculpture has taken in the form of automatons – objects that, after a lever is pulled, acquire an uncanny 'life'. In *Head with Cheeks and Hair (Collection Box)*, a single wooden head is enclosed within a glass box, connected to a complicated, Duchampian system of cranks. You trigger it by inserting some loose change, which starts the cranks grinding. When you do so, the head reacts with grotesque excitement – its grins obscenely, its tongue pops out, its eyes roll, its quiff flutters.

As an artwork, *Head* is an endlessly enjoyable Surrealist object – every time I've visited Southampton City Art Gallery (a few times a year, for as long as I can remember), I stop at this little box, standing unobtrusively beneath a 1930s stripped classical vault, and throw a few coins in. It's both a fascinating artwork in its own right and an elaborate joke about what it means to have a gallery like this in a very ordinary, working city. When I was growing up, the local press would lament the gallery's every purchase, with the acquisition of a Bridget Riley painting especially scandalous; in a brief Conservative administration, the city attempted to sell off its most valuable paintings in order to fill its funding gaps. Every 10p piece helps.

The abundance and generosity of the welfare state era in this city is long gone, with the architect-designed council estates, glassy new schools and sports centres and the newly opened parks all a distant memory, a matter of modernist nostalgia; the port is sold off, the estates severely dilapidated, the centre colonised and disfigured by a series of interchangeable indoor malls. What does survive and thrive, though, is Southampton as a migrant city and one of its smallest but, for me, most moving monuments is this sharply ironic but joyful little wooden box.

Owen Hatherley is the author of The Alienation Effect: How Central European Émigrés Transformed the British Twentieth Century *(Allen Lane).*

In the next issue: Gerhard Richter in Paris, collecting modern art in Miami, Fra Angelico in Florence, BRAFA returns to Brussels, and the Apollo 40

Photo: © Jan Žalud

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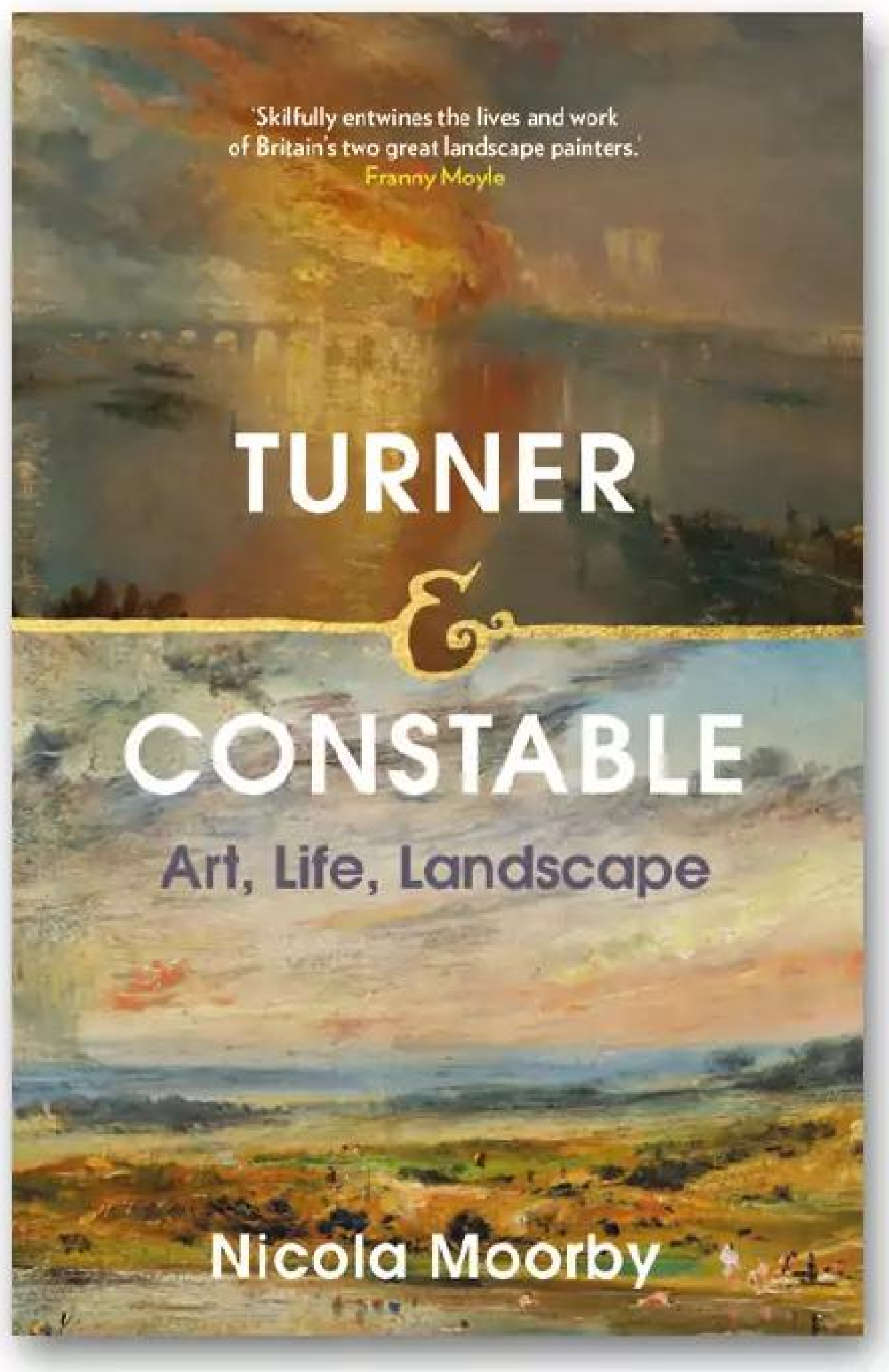
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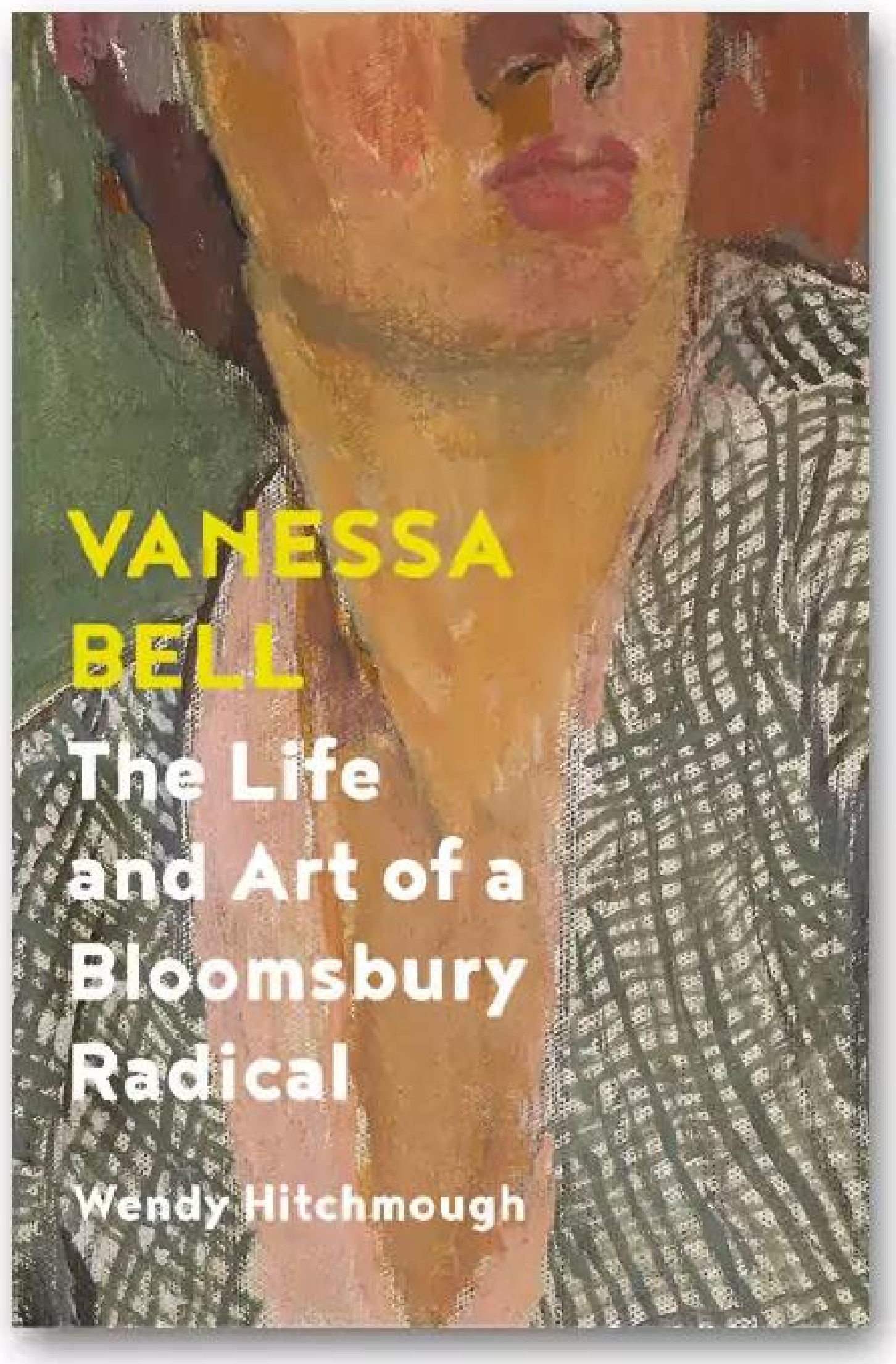
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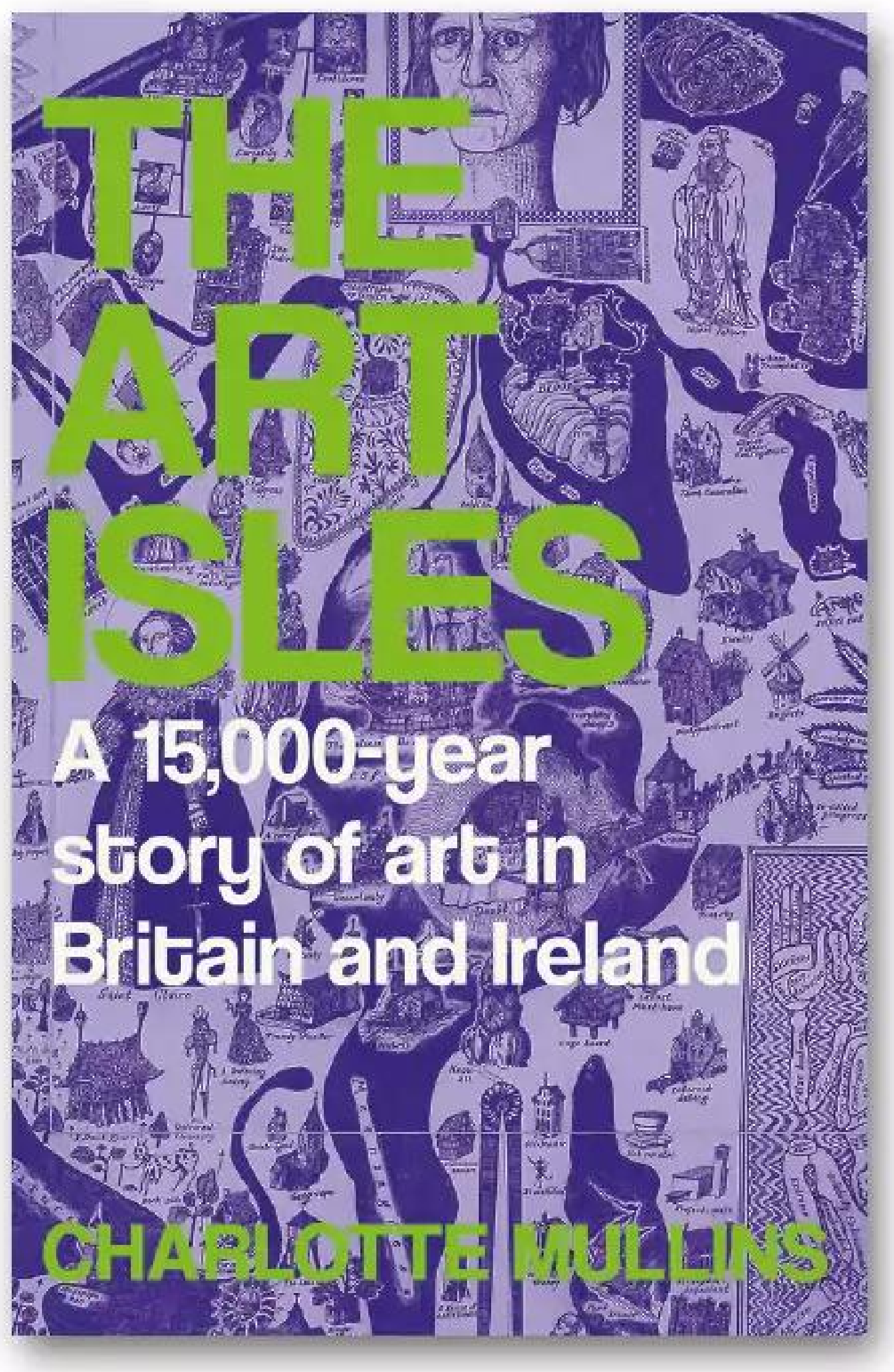
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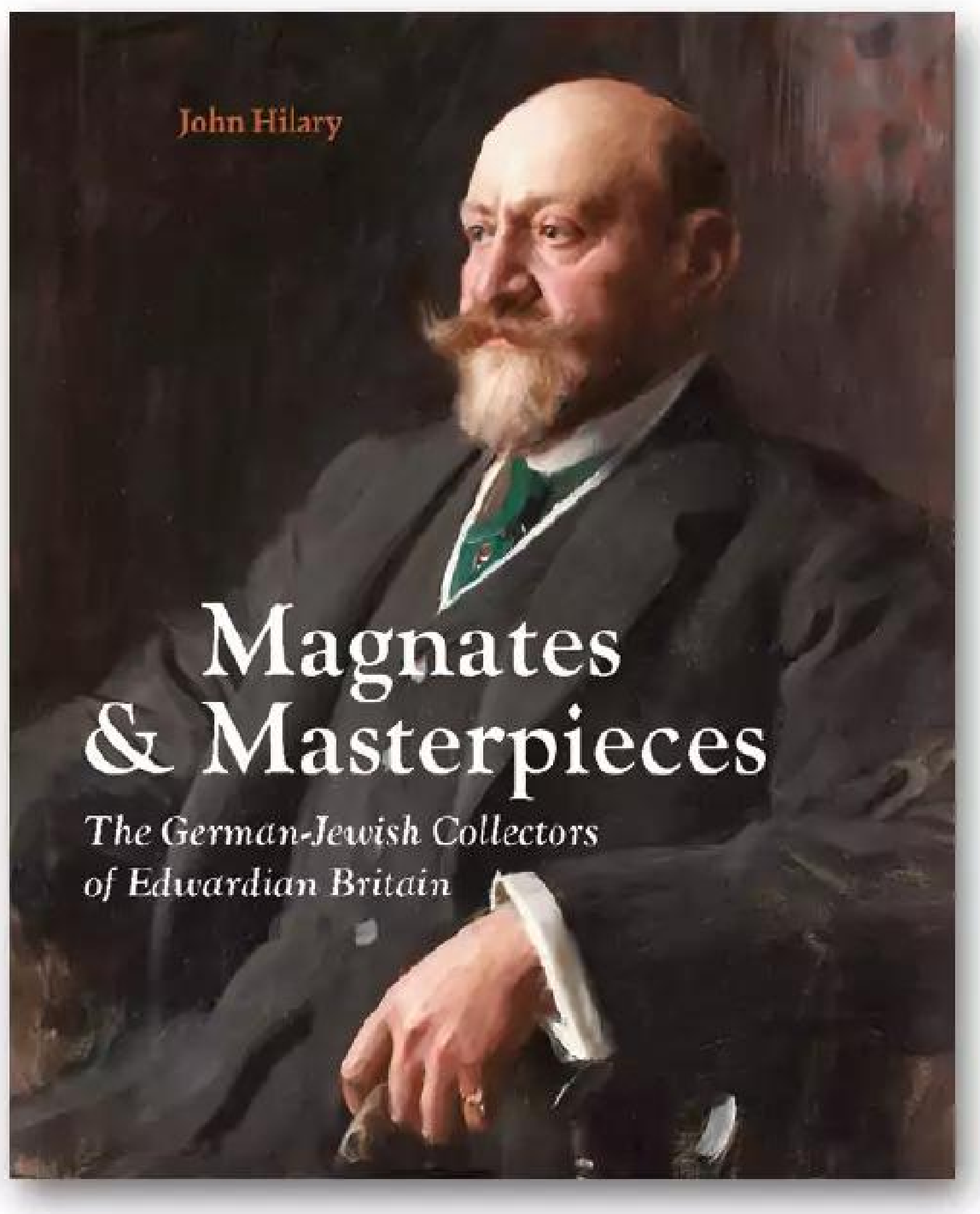
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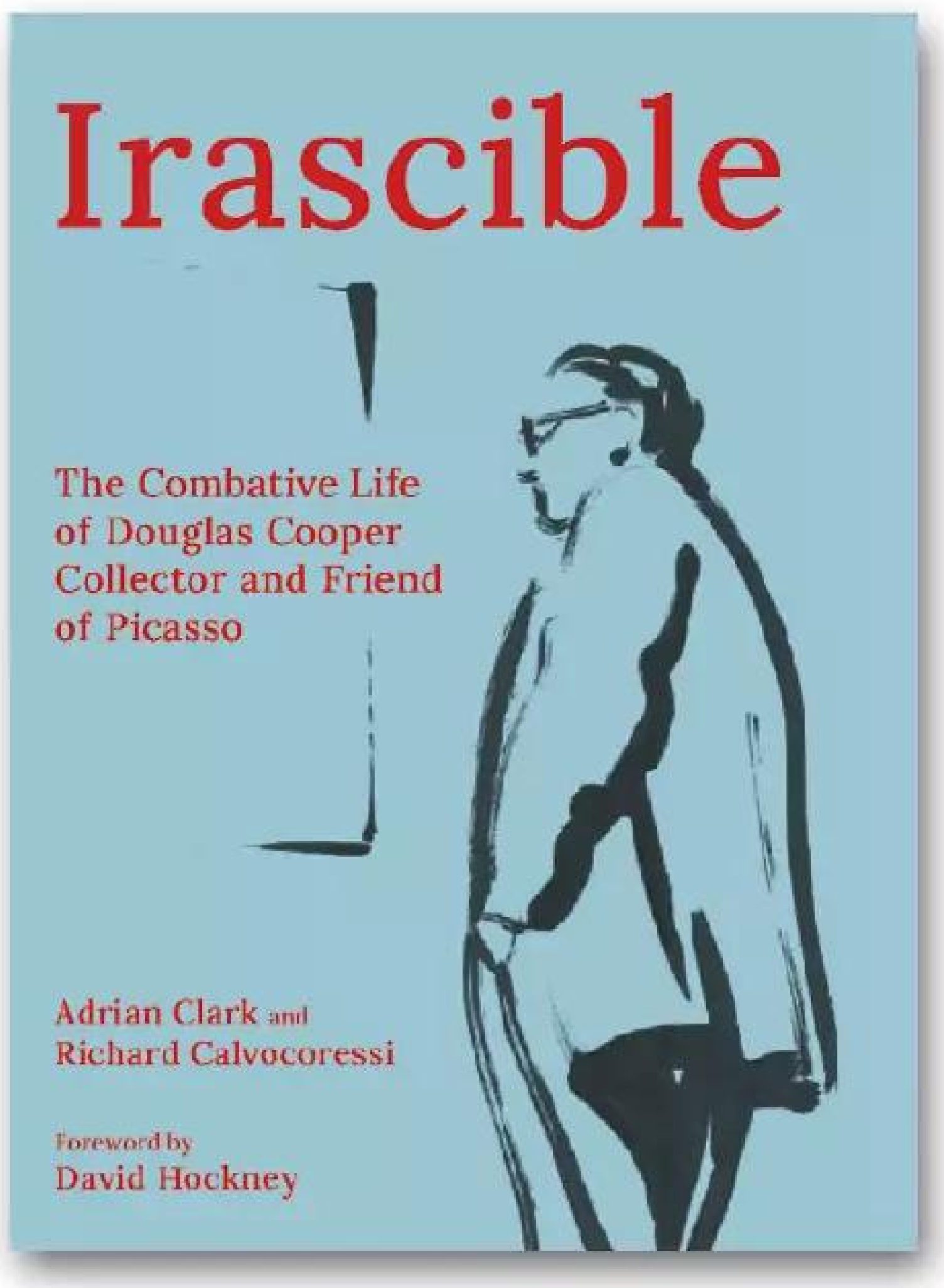
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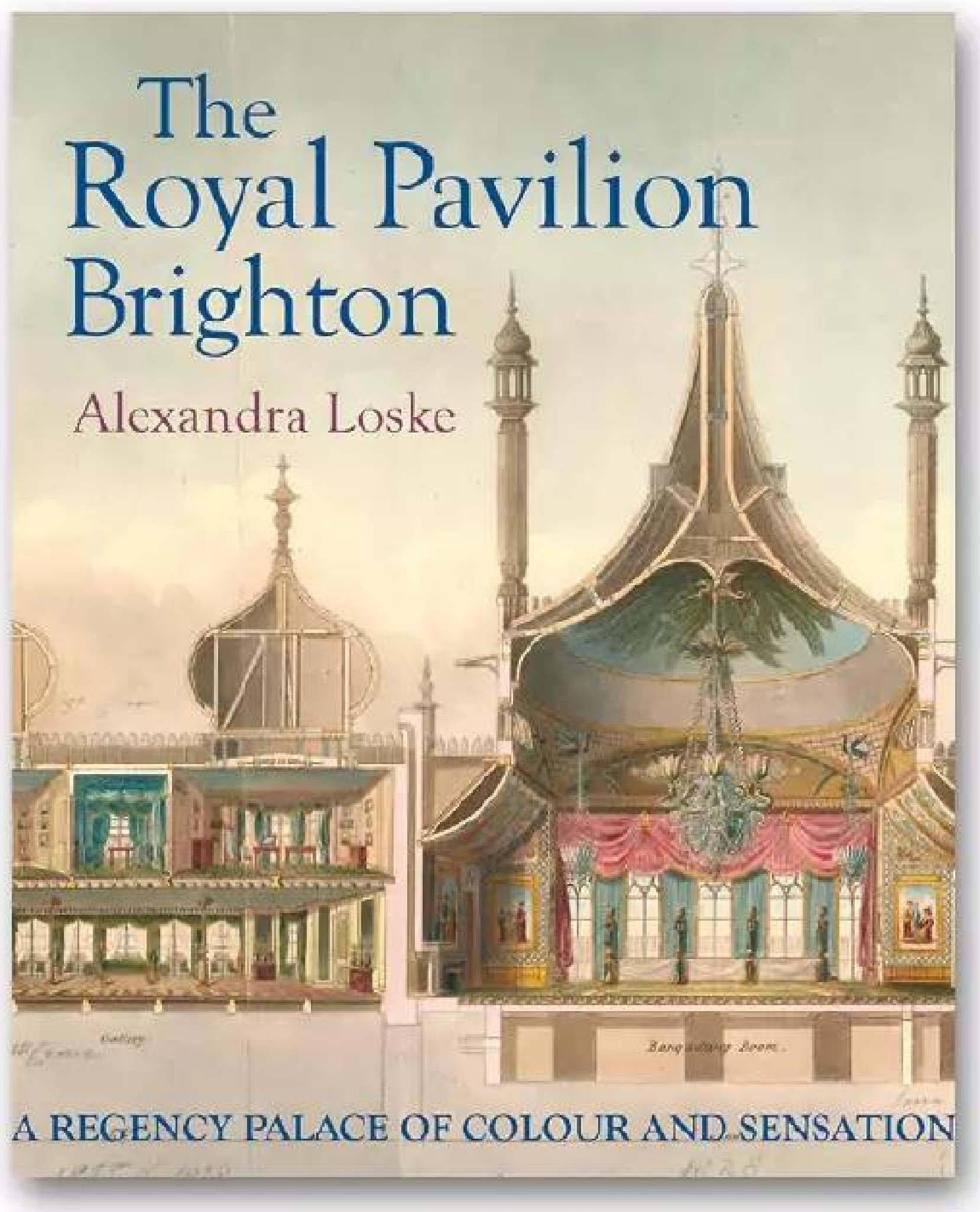
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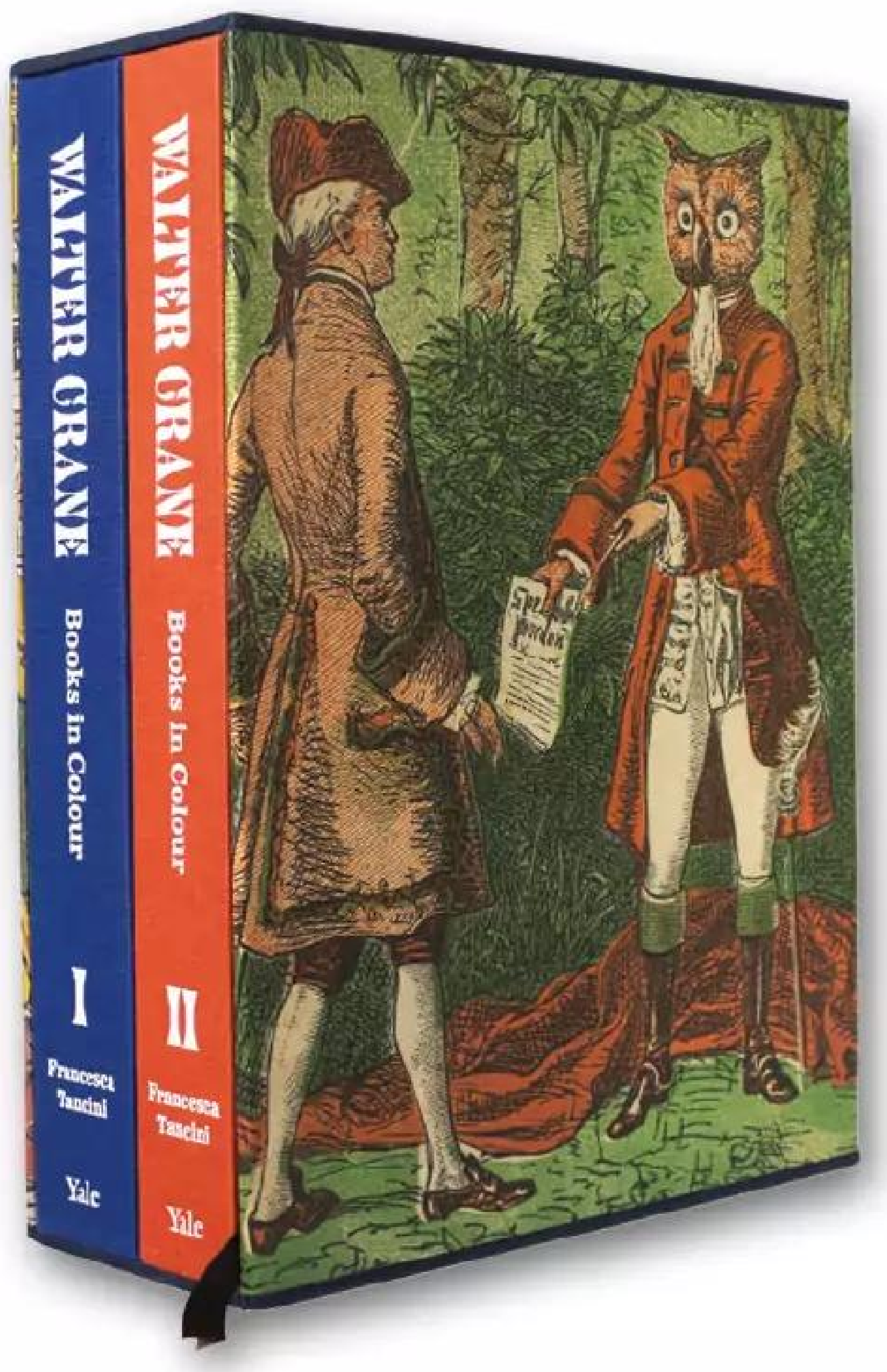
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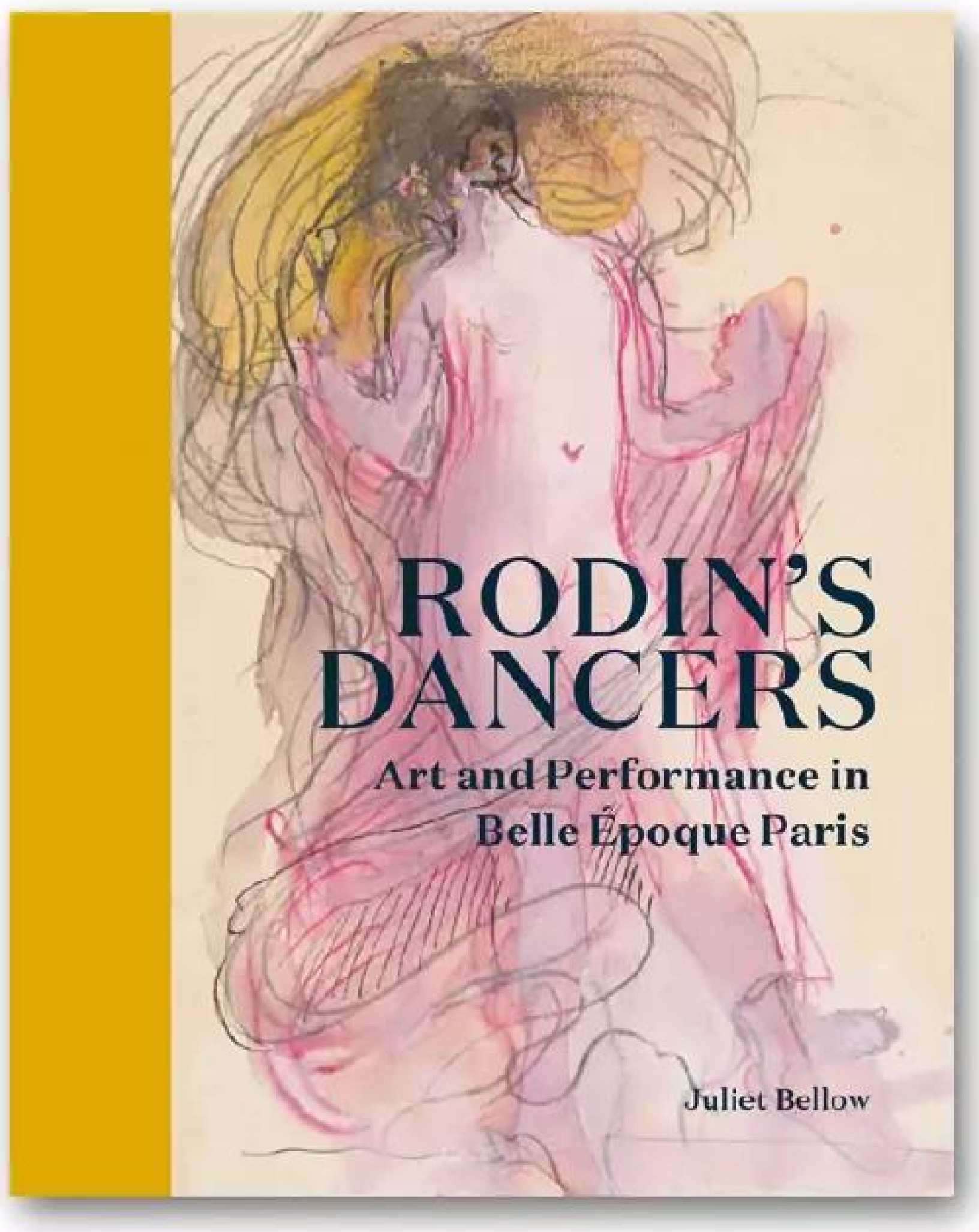
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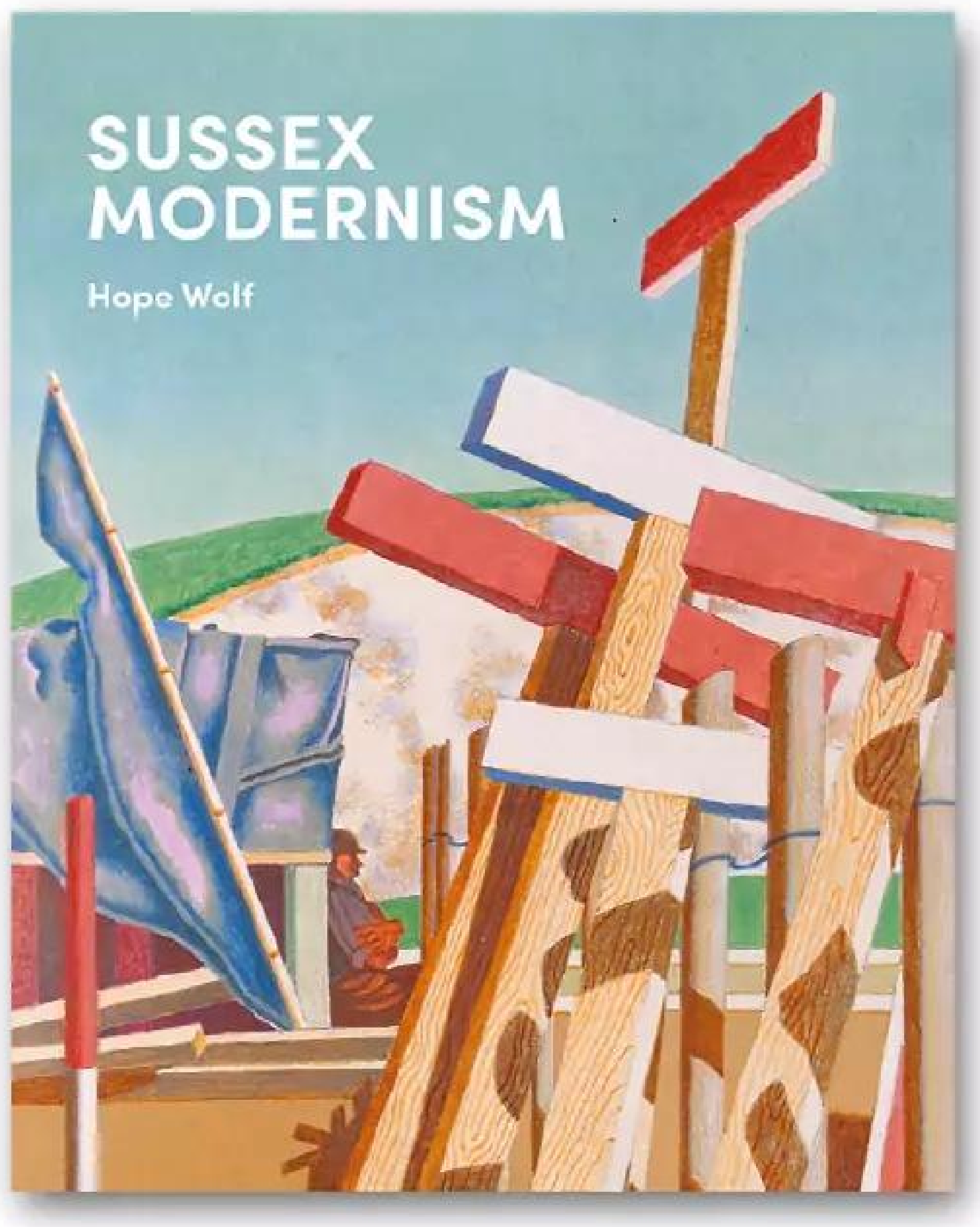
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